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Submissions

Twentieth-Century Literature welcomes the submission of new scholarly essays on any aspect of literature written in the twentieth century. Essays should be prepared in accordance with the *MLA Style Manual,* 2nd ed. Send your essay as an e-mail attachment to Twentieth-Century.Literature @Hofstra.edu. Or mail three hard copies to Twentieth-Century Literature, 107 Hofstra University, Hempstead NY 11549-1070. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope for return.

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Twentieth-Century Literature also invites reviews of recent books of scholarship and criticism focusing on modern literature. Reviews should be 5–12 typed pages, MLA style. Please query one of the coeditors before submission: James Berger <engjab@hofstra.edu> or Anita Patterson <apatters@bu.edu>.

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Under the Nation-State: Modernist Deterritorialization in Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*

Andrew John Miller

In a manner that anticipates the hybrid modes of identity explored by many postcolonial writers, Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano* presents a deterritorialized and nomadic self: a self to which all boundaries appear both permeable and contingent.[1] Directly challenging the nation-centered model that informs not only British imperialism but also the political cultures of decolonized states, Lowry employs as his main character the alcohol-dazed Geoffrey Firmin, a nominally British "consul" whose words, actions, and desires have long since ceased to be clearly tethered to any state-based territorial formation. Although Lowry conflates Firmin's identity with his institutional function by repeatedly referring to him throughout the novel as the Consul, the ultimate effect of this blurring of name and function is to dissociate the word *consul* from the task of representing a specific national state. In many respects, Lowry's Consul thus embodies those fantasies of free-floating authenticity and autonomy that inform much of the existentialist thought in the post-World War II period in which *Under the Volcano* initially appeared; the novel can be read as a textualized battle between the belittling demands of contingency and a desire to avoid the inauthenticity of bad faith. And, indeed, this is what Lowry himself implies in his 1946 letter to the publisher Jonathan Cape, a letter in which, in the course of pleading that Cape's readers give his book a second chance, he suggests that "what profundity and final meaning there is in [the Consul's] fate should be seen also in its universal relationship to the ultimate fate of mankind" (*Selected Letters* 85). As we will see, however, the book is less concerned with the concept of universal humanity than with the growing irrelevance of national citizenship as a source of identity and solidarity.

In exploring this postnational dimension of Lowry's work, I will attempt, as much as possible, to avoid the pervasive tendency to substitute gossip about Lowry's alcoholism and sexual dysfunction for critical engagement with the historical and political implications of his writing. Still, I do wish to acknowledge that Lowry, in his daily life, does not appear to have succumbed to the profound blurrings of national identity that afflict the lives of the major characters in *Under the Volcano.* In a 1946 letter detailing the passport problems that he and his wife had experienced during a visit to Mexico, Lowry emphatically declares "I am an Englishman, resident in Canada. My wife is American" (*Selected Letters* 91). He then goes on to describe how, over the course of a series of nightmarish encounters with Mexican authorities, he and his second wife, Margerie, had found themselves accused of violating the terms of their tourist visas by working as writers. Given the extent to which, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, modernist literary production was being conducted primarily by tourists and expatriates, one wonders what would have happened to modernist literature if such standards had been widely applied. Like many modernist writers, Lowry is, as Hugh Kenner remarks of Ezra Pound, "a frequenter of Elsewhere Communities" (82): communities predicated on the notion that a "special and unparalleled way to know is to go where you've never been" (3). In order to enjoy this experience of expatriate knowing, one must first negotiate the patchwork of passport and visa regulations that, by the 1930s and 1940s, had grown dangerously complex.

At first glance, the unpleasant episode with the Mexican authorities seems to be merely what Lowry imagines it to be: an unusually absurd instance of a government indulging in an overly narrow application of official rules. But this episode provides a profoundly immediate demonstration of the extent to which Lowry was implicated in the nationalist confusions that he wrote about. Lowry imagines the nation-state from the perspective of someone who has personal knowledge of the complications that stem from visa restrictions. In a detailed letter written in the wake of his visa problems, he complains about the ways in which, in his view, the Mexican government had engaged in a "protracted persecution of the nationals of two friendly countries" (*Selected Letters* 112). Margerie, he notes, is "an innocent American citizen." Lowry, for his part, had chosen to retain his British passport, but he seems to have had little faith in the ability of the British government to protect him. He writes: "I did not appeal again to the British Consulate, save on one more occasion, because by this time I had lost faith in their ability, or willingness, to assist me" (102). The incidents that prompted this remark took place after the manuscript of *Under the Volcano* had been completed. But these incidents were a direct continuation of problems that predated the completion of the novel and played important roles in its genesis and development. In the postcolonial and postnational world currently emerging under the pressures of globalization—a world that manages to appear at once imperial and postimperial—Lowry's work takes on a heightened degree of importance. Few writers, modernist or otherwise, are more acutely aware of the institutional mediations involved in the movement from one territorialized national space to another.

As it happens, Lowry's work has found itself at the center of efforts to confer in literary terms all of the privileges of naturalized citizenship. For many years, the reception of *Under the Volcano* has been complicated by what, using Lowry's own words, we might describe as "the problem of Canada" (*Volcano* 124). Since the late 1960s and the emergence of Canadian literature as a distinct field of disciplinary specialization, the book has been widely treated by Canadian scholars as if it were, more or less, a Canadian novel. One of Lowry's most insightful readers, Sherrill Grace, provides a clear and careful statement of this particular way of approaching Lowry:

> National claims to Lowry are generally irrelevant because he remained legally and in other ways British, and what has been called his "Englishness" is apparent in his language. . . . Nevertheless, his work shares much with modern and contemporary Canadian writers, and he does "belong" spiritually to the country he loved. (120)

William H. New is even more circumspect than Grace in his description of Lowry's Canadian affinities: "despite Lowry's increasing affection for the country and his obvious sensitivity to Canadian society and landscape, Canadian literature has no private hold on his work" (10). But New's equivocations are, to a considerable degree, undermined by the fact that his first extended work on Lowry appeared as part of a series that was unequivocally entitled Canadian Writers. Grace, for her part, is compelled to resort to the rather vague phrase " 'belong' spiritually" as a means of justifying a Canadian connection that cannot be substantiated except on an almost entirely circumstantial basis.

Inevitably, there has been resistance to such Canadian appropriations of Lowry's work. Tony Bareham, for instance, emphatically insists on depicting Lowry, "despite geographical factors, as still centrally English" (*Malcolm Lowry* xiii).[2] Yet, to the extent that there exists a Lowry industry, that industry remains broadly tied to notions of Lowry as someone who possesses a special relationship to the Canadian canon. This continued investment in the question of Lowry's relationship to particular nation-states reflects the degree to which, as Dipesh Chakrabarty remarks with reference to history departments, the structural organization of humanistic knowledge remains "embedded in institutional practices that invoke the nation-state at every step" (41). These pervasive institutional practices make it difficult, however, to engage critically with the work of a writer who, like Lowry, actively effaces or obscures his ties to any particular national literary tradition. Christopher Connery has recently noted the continued fruitlessness of the search "for the global novel—a novel whose relation to global space is analogous to the national-space narratives that have largely framed the modern novel to date" (174). After invoking such names as "Salman Rushdie, Bessie Head, Tayeb Salih, Chang-rae Lee, Max Frisch, Amin Maalouf," Connery concludes that "many come close, but no one really fills the desiderata." Lowry, for all of his interest in matters of flight and deterritorialization, is arguably even further from achieving a fully global status. In *Under the Volcano,* he conveys not a sense of global space but, rather, a profoundly claustrophobic sense of immersion in the restricted confines of an isolated Mexican setting. But if we are going to encounter Lowry's work in an appropriately nuanced way, we are going to have to abandon such national categories as Canadian or English in favor of a more fluid sense of how Lowry participates in the emergence of a form of literature that might best be described not as global or post-colonial but, rather, as postnational. When I invoke the postnational, I have in mind what Donald Pease has usefully described as the process through which the citizens of a particular nation-state relinquish their investments in the national master narrative and, rejecting the idea of social consensus, instead pursue "provisional strategies" organized around contingent articulations of identity (6). Bill Readings neatly sums up this process when he declares that "the decline of the nation-state means that culture is no longer a matter of the inclusion or exclusion of a subject in relation to a cultural center" (111–12).

Interpretations of *Under the Volcano* have often been weakened by a failure to recognize the degree to which Lowry is a postnational writer for whom the nation-state no longer serves as a stable principle of order. As a result, interpretations of the novel are often marked by a stubborn insistence on the pertinence of some form or other of national allegory. Ronald Binns, for example, works from the assumption that "[t]he Consul *is,* to an extent, England" (44). Noting that Jacques Laruelle (the failed filmmaker) is a French national, that Geoffrey Firmin (the dissolute consul) and his half-brother Hugh (the radical journalist) are British nationals, and that Firmin's divorced wife Yvonne (the Hollywood actress) is an American national, Binns seeks to frame the novel in clearly demarcated geopolitical terms by ascribing an unambiguous allegorical significance to the fact that "the four main characters are nationals of major world powers" (45). The crucial problem with such a reading is that it ignores the profound degree to which all four main characters are shown to have defined their identities in ways that deny to nationality the force of an inescapable origin.

For example, in our first encounter with Laruelle, we find him listening, with apparent bemusement, to the drunken French of Dr. Arturo Diaz Vigil, a local figure who proves unable properly to pronounce the French word *déalcoholisé:* "He stumbled over the word in French and continued in English" (10). It is extremely revealing that Laruelle does not object either to Dr. Vigil's inadequate French or to his abrupt decision to make no further efforts to speak to him in French. Far from being a representative of the French nation, Laruelle is a deracinated expatriate who no longer retains any decisive connection even to the scattered linguistic community of worldwide speakers of French; like Dr. Vigil, he has abandoned any notion of strict loyalty to his mother tongue. Reinforcing the degree to which the main characters are distanced from the traditional constraints of national narratives, our first introduction to the young Geoffrey Firmin is accompanied by the observation that, at the age of 15, he was a "strange little Anglo-Indian orphan" (22). We go on to learn that his "mother had died when he was a child, in Kashmir" (25), and that after remarrying, "his father . . . had simply, yet scandalously, disappeared" (25). In other words, Firmin is a figure who exemplifies a condition of late-colonial displacement. Although his family connections keep him from becoming a wandering Indian orphan of the sort romanticized in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim,* and although we are given no indication that his mother was not herself English rather than Indian, the description "Anglo-Indian" is enough to relegate to something of a gray area his relation to conventional national narratives. Described as "Anglo-Scottish" (205), Yvonne, for her part, imaginatively identifies with the French heroine of Laruelle's early film *Le Destin de Yvonne Griffaton* (267). Especially attractive to Yvonne is the way in which, at the end of her cinematic "quest" (269), the fictitious "Yvonne Griffaton was in Spain, in Italy; the sea was seen, Algiers, Cyprus, the desert with its mirages, the Sphinx" (270). In this deterritorialized montage of shifting geographical images, Yvonne would seem to find a correlative for her own withdrawal from restricted national fantasies of belonging. As for Hugh, his relation to national identity would seem always to have been a simulacral one. In his English youth, he had taken up the guitar, and enamored of rhythm and blues, he had composed such quasi-American songs as "*Susquehanna Mammy, Slumbering Wabash, Mississippi Sunset, Dismal Swamp*" (160). His subsequent wanderings as a seaman and a journalist are logical extensions of his inability to invest himself in any clearly demarcated national imaginary.

Postnationalist considerations affect not only Lowry's depictions of his main characters but also his depictions of geographical space. Overtly destabilizing the relation between the modern nation-state and the archaic past, Lowry refers to the city in which the novel takes place not by its Spanish name, Cuernavaca—its name on maps of the Mexican republic—but by the name Quauhnahuac, given to it by the Aztec inhabitants of the region.[3] The city, however, though marked by signs of uneven economic development, is clearly integrated into the world economy: we are told, for instance, that a "fine American-style highway leads in from the north" (9), and that there are "many splendid hotels"—a sure sign of participation in the tourist trade. One of the city's hotels is quickly distinguished for us from the others, albeit in a way that is puzzling. In the third paragraph of the novel, we are introduced to the Hotel Casino de la Selva, which, we are soon informed, "is no longer a Casino" (9). The novel thus quickly signals to us the discrepancy between words and things. In the process, the novel also compels us to think about the odd ways in which, in the interlinguistic flux of an increasingly integrated world system, words regularly confront us in ways that, in crossing geographical boundaries, also cross linguistic and lexical boundaries. It is on this transnational basis, for instance, that we are able to discern, in the phrase "de la Selva," traces not only of the "selva oscura" (dark wood) that appears at the beginning of Dante's *Inferno* but also, as New persuasively suggests, of the Norwegian word for self (31). In this conflation of the dark woods, the equally dark self, and the casino, we can discern, in ways that New does not explore, the implication that both one's geographical location and one's personal origins are the products of actions that, in the beginning, are as random as any throw of the dice, but that, with time, take on an appearance of fatal inevitability. The process of personal individuation begins with an act of randomness—a gamble, a shot in the dark—that, over time, congeals into an autonomized monad of selfhood from which any appearance of randomness, or even of potential change, tends to be vigorously excluded.

In the course of his narrative exploration of the exclusionary effects of dogmatic nationalism, Lowry anticipates Hannah Arendt's observations regarding the dangers faced by displaced persons—persons who circulate "outside the common world" (302) that is comfortably inhabited by those nondisplaced persons on whom nation-states have bestowed the privileges and prerogatives of citizenship. As Arendt observes, if one lacks the sponsorship of a nation-state, one can readily come to be regarded merely as "a human being in general—without a profession, without a citizenship, without an opinion, without a deed by which to identify and specify [one]self." A similar perspective emerges in Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial critique of the concept of national identity. Bhabha powerfully reminds us of the difficulties faced by those "wandering peoples who will not be contained within the *Heim* of the national culture and its unisonant discourse" (164). Subjected to "the encrypted discourse of the melancholic and the migrant," such peoples, he maintains, are forced to construct their identities in relation to "another narrative of entry-permits and passports that at once preserve and proliferate, bind and breach the human rights of the nation."

We might seem, in this evocation of diasporic displacement, to be moving rather far from the hermetic obscurities of a work that, as Richard K. Cross observes, tends not only to be "cast . . . in an apocalyptic-symbolist mode" but to be pervaded by dense layers of "multilaminate prose" (26). By drawing on the methodological repertoire of high modernism in his representation of the Consul's decentered self, Lowry would seem to distance himself from geopolitical concerns of the sort that Arendt and Bhabha invoke. Certainly, Lowry exhibits an unmistakable affinity for the "mythic method" influentially hailed by T. S. Eliot; his book owes a substantial debt to, among other things, the Grail narratives explored by Jessie Weston, one of the best-known influences on the structure of *The Waste Land*. But this methodological connection to modernism—more fully in evidence here than in his other works—extends also to matters of plot and character. And it is at this level that the book, for all its gnostic elements, engages with the ineluctably material "narrative of entry-permits and passports": like a variety of modernist works—ranging from Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr* to Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* to Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* to Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* to Pound's *Pisan Cantos*—Lowry's *Under the Volcano* depicts the expatriate experience not as a marginal aberration but, rather, as a paradigmatic instance of what it means to be modern. Far from uncritically celebrating the expatriate experience, however, Lowry's novel suggests that the joys of cosmopolitan modernity are strangely akin to the vulnerabilities of stigmatized homelessness. No longer sustained by either a national identity or a state apparatus, Firmin, the troubled ex-British Consul, ultimately finds himself in a position in which he proves to be as defenseless as any undocumented alien. Despite (or perhaps because of) his efforts to transcend the constraints of national identity, he becomes, in the end, a victim of the xenophobic (and extrajudicial) violence that lurks under the apparent normativity, legality, and rationality of the sovereign nation-state.

For Lowry, this violence is not an accidental aberration but an inescapable aspect of the drive to establish national lines of demarcation. The intensity of Lowry's antinationalism becomes especially apparent in the closing chapter of the novel. At a pivotal point in that chapter, the Consul, still clinging to the concept of state legitimacy, attempts to distinguish "the real police" from the paramilitary "Unión Militar" (355). As the chapter unfolds, however, the reader comes to see that this is a distinction without a difference. Although it is true that he is confronted with armed men who appear to be card-carrying fascists as well as members of the police force, and although it is true that the actions that these men take against the Consul appear to be overzealous examples not of government policy but of anticommunist vigilantism, there is nothing in the text that would enable us to maintain an absolute line of demarcation between "the real police" and the rogue police. As we are tellingly reminded in chapter 4, "the world was always within the binoculars of the police" (110). For

Lowry, the police serve as an image of a society of surveillance—a society of the sort that Foucault would later treat as a quintessentializing modern form of governmentality: a society that, as Foucault remarks, is built on "an anti-nomadic technique" (218).

From Lowry's perspective, the turn toward intensified nationalism always entails this type of increased policing, and is inevitably a destructive turn. He would seem to have no use for a strategic nationalism of the sort advocated by Frantz Fanon, who contends that, in a newly decolonized state, the pursuit of legitimacy inevitably entails the pursuit of a homogeneous national culture. Fanon insists that it is only by pursuing a policy of national particularism that a newly decolonized state can arrive at a sense of universality: "the building of a nation is of necessity accompanied by the discovery and encouragement of universalizing values" (199). From Lowry's perspective, by contrast, national particularism can never be an unmitigatedly constructive force. In the closing chapter of the novel, we see that, by shifting from the internationalism of its support for loyalist Spain to the nationalism of its pursuit of domestic control of oil, the Cárdenas government is adopting the same nationally chauvinistic logic that informs the corporatist policies not only of its domestic enemies in the Unión Militar but also of its newly favored trading partners: Germany, Japan, and Italy.[4]

The dangers of succumbing to this logic are already apparent in the opening chapter of Lowry's novel. There we learn that, at an earlier moment in his life, the Consul, while serving as a British officer on a ship called the *Samaritan,* had been involved—though apparently not directly—in an incident in which some "German officers," after having been captured from a U-boat, "had, it was said, been kidnapped by the *Samaritan's* stokers and burned alive in the furnaces" (38). Reflecting on this episode a year after the Consul's death, Laruelle, playing the role of mournfully reminiscent friend, speculates that "[t]he Consul loved England and as a young man may have subscribed—though it was doubtful, this being rather more in those days the prerogative of non-combatants—to the popular hatred of the enemy" (38–39). Although Laruelle himself seems reluctant to believe that the Consul could have participated in "popular hatred," this early passage reminds us that nationalist ideology creates the conditions that give modern warfare its combination of widespread destructiveness and mass-cultural appeal.

The heightened reliance on passports, visas, and identification papers was, in its early stages, a response not merely to the twentieth-century upsurge in world travel but also to the fears of infiltration and subversion that emerged in the course of World War I and that were solidified in its immediate wake. As Mark Salter observes, "At the moment of its inception, the international passport regime illustrates the twin desires of porous borders and security" (77). In a time of war, when national boundaries are being defended, the outsider is likely to be looked upon first and foremost as a menacing and unwelcome intruder. The consequences can be dire. Under conditions of extremity and emergency—the sort that prevail during times of war and revolution—a person without the appropriate papers can readily be locked away or deported (or left starving at the border) on the grounds that he or she is a spy, a terrorist, or a potential economic burden. Even those who have their papers in order—German Jews in the 1930s, for instance—may find that their particular identity, though documented as legitimate, is nevertheless considered fundamentally alien to the ostensibly organic unity of the nation. When the Consul's brother Hugh meditates on the contradictions that inform his "passion for helping the Jews" (155), he does so with an anxious awareness of what this "passion" means not only in the broader context of the late 1930s but also in the narrower context of Mexico—a country that, as already noted, was drawing closer to the Axis as a result of its understandable attempts to decolonize itself by eliminating foreign-owned oil companies. As Hugh engages in this meditation, he is in the process of turning "a radio dial back and forth," evidently in the hope of hearing an American radio station that plays jazz. Instead, he ends up with a discordant sound that seems to embody the divided nature of Mexico's national situation: "two Mexican voices on different wavelengths were breaking in." It is crucial that, although these "Mexican voices" are "on different wavelengths," they unintentionally work together to block the reception of signals from outside the nation. Analogously, the voices of nationalism, whatever their ideological provenance, work together to promote the logic of nationalist hegemony.

The Consul, for his part, finds himself confusedly confronting the force of such forms of hegemony when, alone and drunk in El Farolito, a disreputable bar inhabited by pimps, fascists, and corrupt police officers, he is asked by the Chief of Rostrums: "Where your papers? What for you have no papers? . . . Where your *passaporte?* What need for you to make disguise?" (370). The mutability that modernist writers were notoriously inclined to value—the mutability that enables one to treat identity as a whirling vortex of masks and personae (as a form of "disguise")—turns out to be a mode of personal performativity for which the defenders of Mexico's homeland security have absolutely no respect. Matters come to a head when the Consul attempts—playfully, though also somewhat desperately—to pass himself off as a writer named William Blackstone. In adopting this alias, the Consul is picking up on his earlier, somewhat whimsical remark: "I'm thinking of becoming a Mexican subject, of going to live among the Indians, like William Blackstone" (302). It is worth noting that the William Blackstone in question is not the famous English jurist but a considerably less famous English clergyman who figured significantly in the early history of Massachusetts; in other words, the Consul is identifying himself with someone who, although actively involved in the British colonization of the Americas, longed for more intimate contact with the aboriginal peoples of the continent—longed, that is, to heal the wounds inflicted not just by colonization but by the emergent ideology of nationalism that was legitimating the colonial process of territorial appropriation. Unamused by this subterfuge, whose historical resonance he does not grasp, the Chief of Rostrums offers a stiff rejoinder: "You are no a de writer, you are de espider, and we shoota de espiders in Mejico" (371).

It is ironic that the Consul is under attack because he has been mistaken for his brother Hugh, whom, in chapter 3, the Consul had recalled as having once been "in a fix over your *carte d'identité* and the passport you so often seem to prefer travelling without" (82). In chapter 6, in a manner that further links him to a pattern of flight and deterritorialization, Hugh asks himself, "how can I be escaping from myself when I am without a place on earth?" (157). Although the Consul is Hugh's brother, he does not share Hugh's affinity for leftist causes. What he does share, however, is Hugh's sense of transcendental homelessness. He talks, in chapter 3, about "becoming a Mexican subject" (87), but a rich connection to the land is something that he is never able to attain. Part of the problem, it would appear, is that he does not fully grasp the logic that distinguishes the subject of a constitutional monarchy—for instance, the British monarchy—from the citizen of a constitutional republic, even a relatively authoritarian republic such as Mexico. A lack of empathy with republican ideals leads him to doubt the value of the desire for independence that impels subjugated peoples to seek an escape from empire. In the course of a debate with his brother, he asks: "What in God's name has all the heroic resistance put up by poor little defenceless peoples . . . to do with the survival of the human spirit?" (311–12).

The Consul clearly intends this to be taken as a rhetorical question. He seems to believe that wars of national liberation are of little if any use. Like T. S. Eliot, he sees considerable merit in a situation in which regions and localities retain their particularity while adhering to the universalizing logic of empire. He would seem—like Lowry himself—to share the localism to which Eliot gives voice toward the beginning of the Paige-Barbour lectures that he delivered at the University of Virginia in 1932: "It is only a law of nature, that local patriotism, when it represents a distinct tradition and culture, takes precedence over a more abstract national patriotism" (*After Strange Gods* 21). Writing in the wake of World War II, Eliot continues to stress the importance of the local: "a local and a general culture are so far from being in conflict, that they are truly necessary to each other" ("Man of Letters" 384). A similar perspective animates much of Lowry's work. Despite his skepticism regarding the liberatory possibilities of national self-determination, he displays an acute interest in discovering in concrete local particulars a way into universality and timelessness. Indeed, a key aspect of Lowry's modernist technique is his insistence on the concreteness of the local as a means of achieving mythological resonances that are meant to be perceived as universal. With the exception of the opening chapter, which disorients readers by abruptly jumping a year forward in time, the main action of *Under the Volcano,* like that of Joyce's *Ulysses,* is confined to a single day, as well as to a single, clearly delineated geographical milieu. From start to finish, most of the external actions of the characters (as opposed to their internal recollections) occur within reasonable driving distance of "the town of Quauhnahuac," a town whose coordinates are, in the last sentence of the novel's opening paragraph, evoked in laborious detail:

> [Quauhnahuac] is situated well south of the Tropic of Cancer, to be exact, on the nineteenth parallel, in about the same latitude as the Revillagigedo Islands to the west in the Pacific, or very much farther west, the southernmost tip of Hawaii—and as the port of Tzucox to the east on the Atlantic seaboard of Yucatan near the border of British Honduras, or very much farther east, the town of Juggernaut, in India, on the Bay of Bengal.

At first glance, this passage seems designed merely to call our attention to the arbitrariness of geographical associations. From this perspective, the territories named in the passage would appear to have nothing meaningful in common other than the fact that they happen to share a similar, albeit entirely arbitrary and contingent, relation to the cartographical construct known as the nineteenth parallel. On further consideration, however, it becomes apparent that the connections among these places are not entirely arbitrary: in various ways they exemplify how the actions of colonial powers have left their mark on the world. Relying simply on the evocative power of place names, Lowry subtly weaves together the colonial and imperial histories that have made such varied places as Hawaii, Honduras, and India seem elements in a single narrative of global modernization.

Given Lowry's often-stated affinity for the pursuit of transcendence and universality, it is not surprising that interpreters have regularly been inclined to translate into transcendental terms the book's obvious immersion in the sort of messy particulars of both Mexican and world history that have been informing my analysis. Lowry, for his part, did not entirely deny the importance of these particulars. In a letter written in early 1950 to Canadian broadcaster Derek Pethick, he readily concedes that "*Volcano* is . . . quite definitely on one plane of political parable" (*Selected Letters* 199). He is quick, however, to reject any suggestion that he is indulging in some sort of dull political allegory; he carefully points out that "I didn't mean it to suggest that the future belongs to those Mexican workers necessarily, or indeed to anybody at all." Yet although he thus attempts to call our attention back to the universalistic element in his politics, his novel's movement toward universalized transcendence takes place in the context of highly particularized and localized references to the troubled realities of Mexico in 1938 and 1939: an imperfectly decolonized state in which, not long before, British and American interests had been struggling over control of the region's oil supplies—a circumstance that, in March 1938, had resulted in the nationalization of Mexico's petroleum industry. Far from being a tangential matter, this piece of sociopolitical history is intimately connected with the events of Lowry's novel; after all, the Consul's ambiguous situation results first and foremost from Britain's decision to break off diplomatic relations with Mexico, a decision precipitated by Mexico's nationalization of British oil interests. Although Lowry's book is indeed partly about the perceived nature of man's fate under conditions of modernity—a fate that Lowry conceives in broadly Faustian terms—it is also partly about the inadequacies of those national formations that, by virtue of their administrative and mass-cultural articulations, sustain our sense of having decisively broken with an archaic past. In the process of grappling with the inadequacies of nationalism, Lowry arrives at a vision of North America in which Canada and Mexico figure more centrally than the United States. His novel is situated in those northern and southern "borderlands" that US models of identity would prefer to regard as entirely impermeable and unambiguous.

It is difficult, at this point, to avoid striking a contemporary note. In the wake of September 11, 2001, the North American borderlands are once again being invoked, in the American national imaginary, as places from which threats are likely to emanate. Given the horrendous circumstances in which we find ourselves, some of the resultant precautions are understandable. But they nonetheless symptomize divisions that have grown out of a highly specific set of colonial—and postcolonial—histories. Canada, after all, has been crucially marked by the peculiar status that it long enjoyed as "British North America," just as Mexico has been crucially marked by the way its independence from Spain was rapidly followed by the US appropriation of vast stretches of Mexican territory. As someone whose most powerful experiences were to take place either on the northern border of Mexico or on the southwest coast of British Columbia, Lowry is in the position of imagining North America from what are typically regarded as the margins of the continent. This engagement with marginalized regions of North America does not recode itself in his work in national terms; instead, it manifests itself as an acutely postnationalist rejection of all appeals to the force of nationalist cohesion. Lowry can thus be seen to provide an early articulation of what Gayatri Spivak has recently described as "planetarity," a term meant to resist the implications of human control suggested by "globalization" and to stress instead the degree to which we are "planetary subjects rather than global agents." (73).

When we view the novel from this broadly geopolitical perspective, we can more fully understand the significance of having the main events take place in 1938, a year in which the reverberations of fascism's impending triumph in Spain were being felt throughout the world—even in those isolated portions of Mexico in which Lowry situates his narrative. Matters are made more ominous by the fact that, in the novel's opening chapter, Lowry introduces us to these main events from the retrospective vantage point of November 1939. The public violence of World War II tacitly frames Lowry's often solipsistic narrative of love, drunkenness, and self-destruction. In the localized Mexican milieu that Lowry depicts, the corrupt agents of the police serve as the most visible embodiment of the broader violence that was then being actively manifested, on a global scale, by the military instrumentalities of the nation-state. In the closing chapter of the novel, there can no longer be any doubt that the Mexican police are being employed as the key element in a geopolitical allegory. By depicting the police in the café as being not only metaphorical fascists but also literal ones, Lowry compels us to recognize the dangerous ethnocentrism and violence that is part of the logic of state-based nationalism—even when that nationalism is motivated by the desire of postcolonial states (such as Mexico) to assert their sovereignty.

This brings me to one of the most curious of the many curious statements about nationalism that get made in the course of Lowry's novel. This statement comes at an unsettling moment in the final chapter. After being charged by the Chief of Rostrums with a crime of identity—the crime of being English—the Consul insists, with seeming perversity, that "I happen to be American" (369). At first glance, this appears to be merely another of his drunken illusions. After all, when viewed from the perspective of compulsory nationalism, such a statement would seem to stand in self-evidently ludicrous contradiction not only to the Consul's British lineage but also to his (nominal) status as someone whose mission is to intervene on behalf of those who happen to share with him a British passport. The statement only appears ludicrous, however, if we assume that, when he speaks of being American, the Consul means that he is a citizen of the United States. If we instead assume that he wishes, more broadly, to describe himself as someone who feels a sense of connection with the North American continent, then this statement takes on a profoundly different resonance, one that draws us decisively into the domain of the postnational.

In a narrower way, of course, this attempt to mutate into an American has a protective value. The Consul, it seems, has been mistaken for his brother Hugh; as a result, he is being held accountable, by the profascist police in the café, for his brother's political engagements—and especially for those engagements that have tied his brother, even if only tenuously, to the loyalist cause in Spain. By denying that he is English, the Consul implicitly severs himself from his brother. Ironically, however, this act of denial ends up working against him, since it makes it clear that the Consul self-consciously considers his relation to national identity to be performative rather than essential. In the context in which he finds himself, frivolousness about national identity is regarded with the same suspicion that, in other repressive contexts, might be accorded to frivolousness about religious or sexual identity.

Notes

1. In my use of the term *deterritorialization* I am indebted to the complex explorations of the term found in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus.*

2. For a more overtly polemical discussion of this question, see Bareham's essay "The Englishness of Malcolm Lowry."

3. Here as elsewhere throughout the essay, I have profited from the information conveniently compiled by Chris Ackerley and Lawrence J. Clipper in *A Companion to* Under the Volcano.

4. My sense of the pertinent aspects of Mexican history has been derived, to a significant degree, from the excellent notes provided by Ackerley and Clipper. Also of value to me have been Enriques Krauze's *Mexico: Biography of Power,* Jan Bazant's *A Concise History of Mexico,* and *The Oxford History of Mexico.*

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Reading Word, Image, and the Body of the Book: Ted Hughes and Leonard Baskin's *Cave Birds*

Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux

> From Yeats and Pound to Stein and Williams and the writers of the Harlem Renaissance, fine-printing work, the small press, and the decorated book fashioned the bibliographical face of the modernist world.
>
> —Jerome McGann (7)

When John Millington Synge declared "All art is collaboration" (vi), he anticipated by some 80 years the arguments such textual scholars as Jerome McGann have been making since the mid-1980s for the collaborative nature of literary production. Synge was thinking about the contributions the peasants he met on the Aran Islands made to his flamboyantly imaginative language; textual critics would add the whole panoply of those involved in all stages of literary production from initial drafts through print or electronic artifact. As recent material readings of modernism suggest, creative partnerships—both visible and not so visible—have especially contributed to the vitality and variety of twentieth-century literature: *The Waste Land* (Eliot and Pound), *Look Homeward, Angel* (Thomas Wolfe and Maxwell Perkins), *Paul Bunyan* (W. H. Auden and Benjamin Britten), and *Stones* (Frank O'Hara and Larry Rivers) are only some of the modern examples of the collaborations among writers, artists, composers, editors, publishers, and printers that have challenged what Jack Stillinger aptly calls "the myth of solitary genius."[1]

Such partnerships in the twentieth century often thrived at the small,

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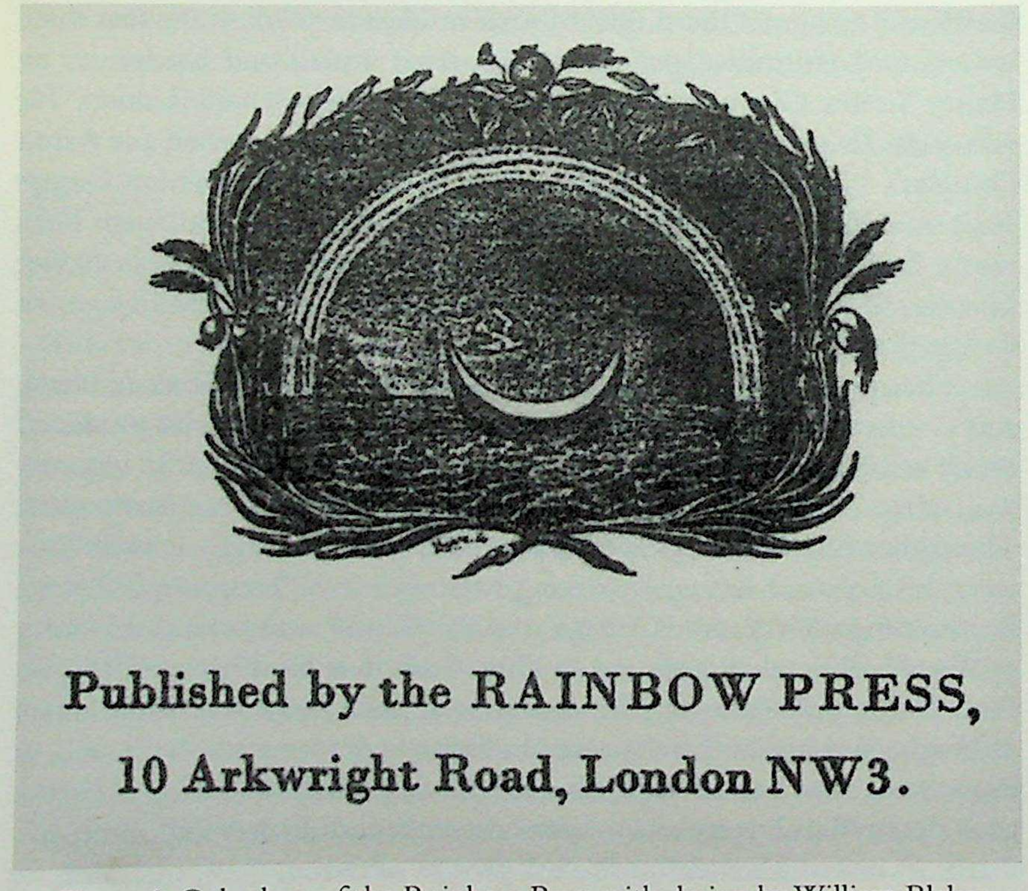
innovative presses—themselves collaborative affairs—that encouraged and sometimes commissioned collaborations, ventured to publish their results, and created "the bibliographical face of the modernist world."The boom in small- and-fine press printing that began with William Morris's Kelmscott and continues through Hogarth and Cuala to Gehenna, Janus, Arion, Perishable, and Granary has been especially important in creating opportunities for collaborations between writers and visual artists.[2] Deriving from the European modernist tradition of the *livre d'artiste* as well as from Blake and Morris, the nexus of fine-press printing and verbal-visual collaboration made possible much experimental twentieth-century literature, especially poetry, that sought to cross the perceived boundaries of media. If the twentieth century can be characterized by a "pictorial turn" into our current culture of images, as W. J. T. Mitchell has argued (*Picture Theory* 11–34), poets participated in it from the start, both in an increasing awareness of the visual body of language itself (from Dada and Pound to Susan Howe) and in collaborative ventures in texts combining words and images. One thinks of such modernist work as the first three volumes of Pound's *Cantos* with decorated initials and headpieces by Henry Strater, Gladys Hines, and Dorothy Pound; of Laura Riding's *The Life of the Dead* with John Aldridge; of James Weldon Johnson and Aaron Douglas's *God's Trombones;* and of such postwar work as Thom Gunn's *Positives* with photographs by Ander Gunn, Susan Howe and Susan Bee's recent *Bed Hangings,* and numerous volumes by Robert Creeley including *Numbers* with Robert Indiana, *A Sight* with R. B. Kitaj, and *Signs* with Georg Baselitz.[3]

Though not often placed in the company of such poets as Howe and Creeley, Ted Hughes belongs to this tradition. A poet who produced much of his work for both adults and children in collaboration with visual artists, he frequently published that work with small and fine presses. Throughout his life, Hughes paid particular attention to the textual bodies of his poems, habitually working with such small presses as Gehenna, Bartholomew (at Exeter College of Art), Sceptre, and Janus. Like many of Yeats's works that appeared in limited editions from his sister's Cuala Press before publication by his commercial publisher, in the 1970s many of Hughes's volumes first appeared in limited editions from the Rainbow Press, which he owned with his sister Olwyn.[4] Established in 1971, the press declared its lineage as a modern descendant of Blake's radical experiments in material textuality; Blake's picture of moon, dove, and rainbow (fig. 1) served as its colophon. A money-making venture and an outlet for his own work and that of Plath and others, Rainbow was a collaborative effort.[5] Olwyn often planned the volumes and selected the designs and materials. Hughes took a hand in their production, suggesting the frequently used Bodoni type and the lushly decorated Japanese endpapers in some volumes (Sagar and Tabor 4). Under the imprint of Morrigu Press, his son Nicholas, as a teenager, printed broadsides of his father's poems on the Hugheses' Albion handpress (87–88, 93–94). Rainbow produced elegant, sensuous volumes, often small enough to hold intimately (the large goat-vellum-covered *Moortown Elegies* is a notable exception), with deeply colored, silky leather bindings stamped simply in silver or gold, contrasting with the heavy, cream-colored, rough Italian paper they favored on the inside.[6]

Hughes demonstrated his keen awareness of the physical aspects of texts and the signifying qualities of language as graphic marks on a page



Published by the RAINBOW PRESS,
10 Arkwright Road, London NW3.

Figure 1. Colophon of the Rainbow Press with design by William Blake.

in the introduction to his 1968 selection of Emily Dickinson's poems, where he described her fascicles in language tuned to the particular sensual qualities of the poems, "copied in her headlong, simplified script, and sewn loosely together in little booklets" ("Emily Dickinson" 154). Dickinson's "eccentric dashes," he argued against the then-prevailing practice of regularizing her punctuation, "are an integral part of her method and style, and cannot be translated to commas, semicolons and the rest without deadening the wonderfully naked voltage of the poems." For Hughes, bibliographic normalizing stifled Dickinson's poems, which Hughes understood as having a kind of primitive physical life of their own, naked and electric. He conceived of his own poems as physically alive, akin to the animals he loved to catch as a boy in the Yorkshire countryside. "In a way," he said, "I suppose, I think of poems as a sort of animal" ("Poetry in the Making" 10).

Hughes developed his own sense of the animal physicality of his poems less by pursuing radical typographic innovation than by experimenting persistently with the interplay of words and images in the graphic field of the book. Many of Hughes's books from both commercial and private presses contain pictures, mostly of animals and landscapes. Some of the pictures are his own; most are done by others. In "Poetry in the Making," he recalls his pleasure as a child in "modelling and drawing," remembering in particular his satisfaction when he copied animals from a "thick green-backed" book of "glossy photographs" his aunt had given him for his fourth birthday: "I can remember very vividly the excitement with which I used to sit staring at my drawings, and it is a similar thing I feel nowadays with poems" (10–11). Bearing witness to the way the graphic marks of language and of the visual arts flow in and out of each other, some manuscript pages of his poems contain his drawings of animals, often fantastical. That relation is occasionally carried onto the printed page, where text and picture intermix, as in his own illustration in *Earth-moon* (fig. 2).

From the 1970s on, Hughes frequently collaborated on volumes of poems with visual artists, including photographers Fay Godwin (*Remains of Elmet*, 1979) and Peter Keen (*River*, 1983) and, most especially, with American graphic artist and sculptor Leonard Baskin. Hughes met Baskin during the year he and Plath spent in Northampton, Massachusetts (1957–58), where Baskin was a colleague of Plath's at Smith College. They began a lifelong friendship, important to them both. In 1942, as an undergradu-

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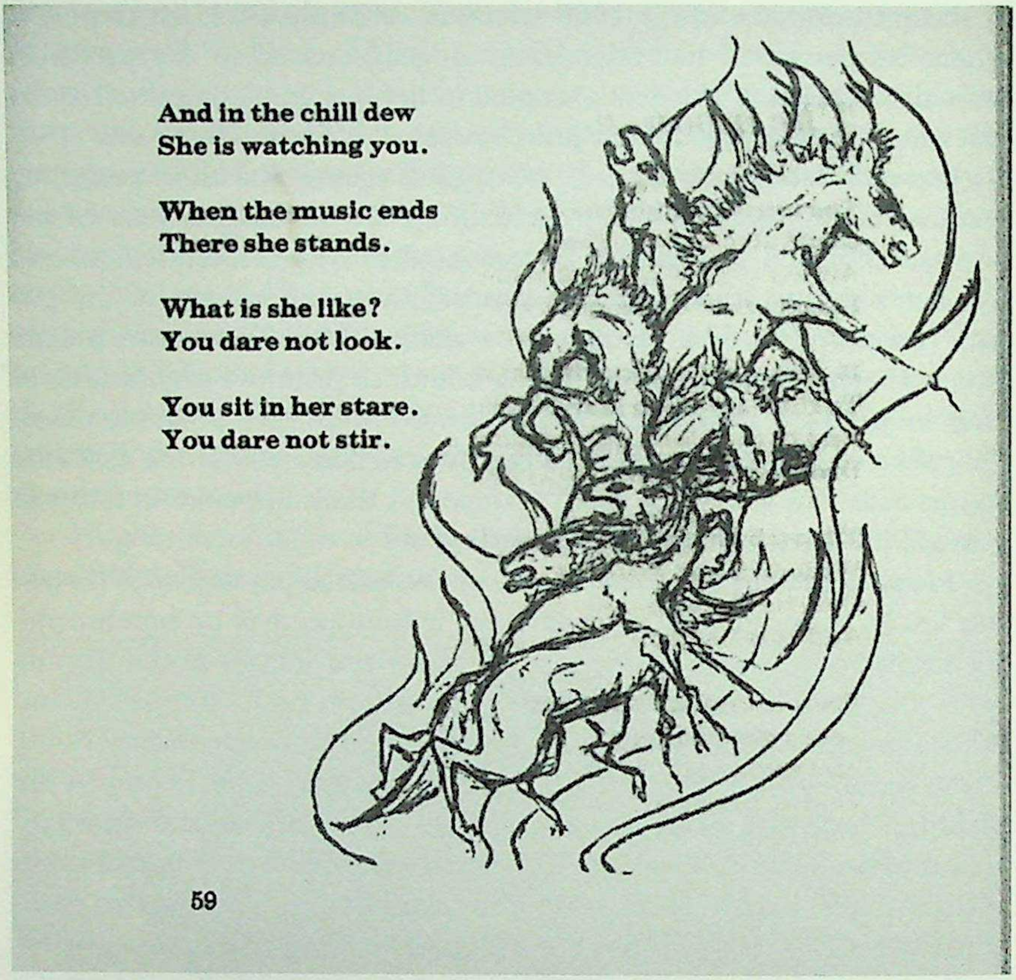

And in the chill dew
She is watching you.

When the music ends
There she stands.

What is she like?
You dare not look.

You sit in her stare.
You dare not stir.

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Figure 2. Drawing by Ted Hughes to illustrate his poem "Moon-mare" in *Earth-moon*.

ate at Yale, Baskin had founded Gehenna Press, which was to become one of the most important fine presses of the century. In Baskin Hughes found a mythic thinker as obsessed with the ways of animals, especially birds, as he was. Baskin's work seemed to Hughes to derive from the written word, to be coextensive with the graphicality of language itself.[7] In his important introduction to *The Collected Prints of Leonard Baskin,* which he spent the first three months of 1983 writing, Hughes commented that Baskin's "style springs from Hebrew script itself—all those Alephs, Bets, Lameds, Yods, crammed in a basketry of nerves, growing heads, tails, feelers, hair, mouths" ("Hanged Man" 86). The seeds of *Crow* (1970), the volume that firmly placed Hughes on the map of modern poetry, were sown shortly after Plath's suicide in 1963, when, in an effort to "drive Hughes 'from despair into activity,'" Baskin asked him to write poems on some crow drawings, with the results to be printed at Gehenna.[8] In the troubled, unsettled years following Plath's death, Hughes was able to write little poetry, though he wrote much criticism, including the essay on Dickinson. In 1967 Baskin's drawings and Hughes's recent reading of Eastern European poets became the route back into poetry. They precipitated the major shift in style that enabled Hughes to write out of the tragedy of his life in the laconically cruel poems of *Crow.* In Baskin's drawings of birds—alert, predatory, intense, with "their tessera-like single-minded devotion to their ways of death" (Leonard Baskin 16)—Hughes clearly found images of his own dark and violent vision. *Crow* inaugurated a creative partnership with Baskin that lasted for more than 30 years and produced more than 10 collaborations including several children's books, *Cave Birds: An Alchemical Cave Drama* (1978), and *Capriccio* (1990).[9] Their last project, *Howls and Whispers,* an illustrated edition of 11 poems on Hughes's relationship with Plath not included in *Birthday Letters,* appeared the year of Hughes's death (1998). Baskin redesigned Blake for the Rainbow Press's colophon (fig. 3). Hughes's collaboration with Baskin is arguably the most important sustained relationship of Hughes's literary career. The volumes they produced together comprise a sizable proportion of Hughes's work, and an essential part of his achievement as a poet.

If reading verbal-visual texts is, as Mary Ann Caws suggests, "stressed,"

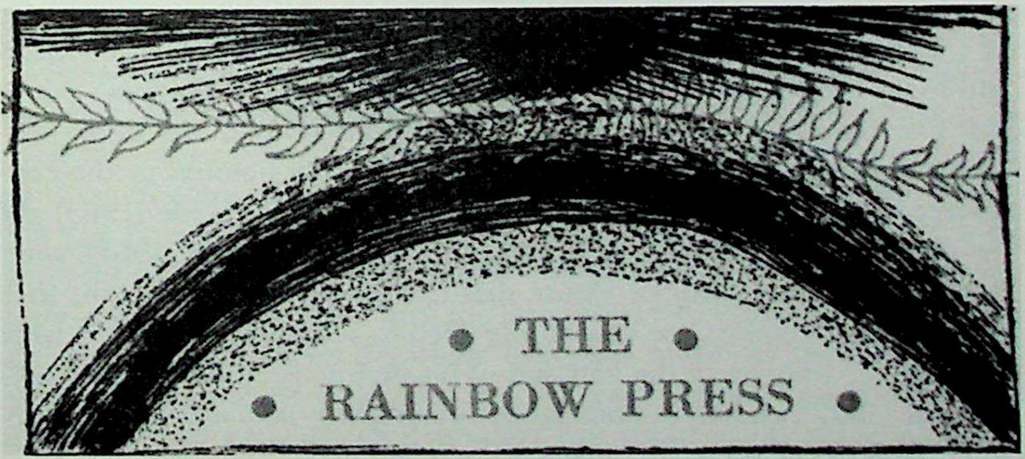

Figure 3. Colophon of the Rainbow Press by Leonard Baskin.

it is especially so in the case of Hughes. While many studies speak to the power of images for Hughes and the importance of the collaborations in his life, many others do not mention them, and very few read them as part of the work.[10] As with most verbal-visual texts, there is with Hughes's texts the difficulty of articulating the word and image together or in relation. (How does one keep both arts simultaneously in view? How does one read doubly? Where is an adequate vocabulary?) This is complicated by the uncertain status of the image in a modern book for grown-ups: an illustration is usually understood as an incidental decoration merely. Further, with Hughes, sheer difficulty has kept critics focused on explication. Perhaps most importantly, attitudes toward Hughes's collaborations are curiously bound up in the dissension around his relationship with Plath. Efforts by admirers to defend Hughes against the charge of being an unwelcome collaborator as editor of Plath's *Ariel* (and as destroyer of her last journal) have often resulted in arguments that uncouple him from other partnerships as well. Leonard Scigaj, one of Hughes's most attentive critics and one sympathetic to his collaborations, voices explicitly the undercurrent in much Hughes criticism: "It would be untrue . . . to suggest that Hughes needs commissions [from Baskin], or myth or folklore texts to generate creative ideas . . ." (*Ted Hughes* 13). But Hughes's career suggests a different story. The relationship with Baskin is part of a larger pattern of interart collaborations that constantly fed his work, including that for the theater and cinema with Peter Brook (*Seneca's Oedipus* [1968], *King Lear* [1968], and *Orghast* [1970]) as well as that with Fay Godwin and Peter Keen.

In what follows, I'd like to look in detail at two textual incarnations of *Cave Birds,* Hughes's most extensive collaboration with Leonard Baskin, and focus on how we might read the three elements of Hughes's poetic that I've suggested here—words, images, and the body of the book—together in relation. Created in the 1970s, *Cave Birds* belongs to the controversial period of Hughes's career following Plath's suicide (1963) and the deaths of his lover Assia Wevill and their daughter Shura (1967), when the precise observations of nature that had given his early poems their astonishing vividness gave way to the need to see life and death in large, archetypal narratives in the volumes of his middle period—*Crow* (1970), *Gaudete* (1977), and *Cave Birds.* In her description of *Crow,* Elaine Feinstein suggests the desperate terms of these poems:

> Under the influence of Baskin, and Central European poets such as János Pilinszky and Vasko Popa, who understood the brutality of experience under totalitarian regimes, Hughes grappled with a darkness that few English poets of the time felt any necessity to allow into their poetry. His vision is comparable only to Beckett's in its bleakness. (160–61)

In its fullest elaboration, *Cave Birds* is a series of narratively linked poems and black-and-white drawings that tells the tale of a guilty and suffering hero (sometimes cockerel, sometimes crow) who is judged, sentenced, sacrificed, and reborn. The poems are complex and allusive, an interweaving of pre-Christian (especially Egyptian) mythology with alchemy, shamanism, Blake, and Jung. Together the poems and pictures chart the hero's quest: after judgment in this world and purgation in the next, the disintegrated parts of the hero's being are, in a Lawrentian vision, united in an exchange with the neglected female and given new life.

In describing how we might read the constituent parts of *Cave Birds* (the poems, images, and the body of the book), I want to show, first, how these three elements work together to construct the volume's narrative. A multimedia book with a lively, often witty interplay of elements, *Cave Birds* pursues its argument—this *is* a didactic book—in several interrelated arenas at once. Reading the poems alone, we miss much of the interest, pleasure, and complexity of *Cave Birds.* Reading the images and poems in relation also brings into relief Hughes's and Baskin's negotiations with gender, opening them back into the history of gendered discourse about the arts and bringing us face to face with the gynophobic undertow of the volume's insistence on the importance of the female.

Second, I want to suggest that *Cave Birds* is, in part, about the process of its own making. Both the individual poems and the narrative as a whole self-reflexively comment on words and images, on seeing and saying. When the images and the body of the book are given their due along with the poems, the collaboration itself is displayed page by page and enters the volume's narrative. This has implications not only for how we might read the volume but also for how we might respond to Hughes's mythologizing. Graham Bradshaw expresses what has troubled many readers of Hughes: the possibility that Hughes's synthetic mythmaking is empty, that it is "a *tour de force* that might cast doubt on the authenticity of the experience the poetry conveys" (237). But if Hughes's quest narrative can seem schematic and overblown in its epic ambitions, the drama of his crisis as a poet and his struggle to understand death, grief, suffering, and guilt in terms larger than himself nonetheless remain compelling. The active presence of the collaboration, once let into our field of reading, helps keep that struggle before us. On a local scale, the collaboration movingly embodies the desire for connection that the mythic narrative envisions.

The collaboration

Cave Birds is, in fact, not one text but several, the result of a complex compositional process. The *Cave Birds* that most readers encounter is the 1978 Faber & Faber trade edition (published by Viking in New York in 1979 from the same plates), whose narrative I've described above. Its bibliographic face disturbs. Baskin's weird anthropomorphic birds (fig. 4) loom on all but one spread, filling the right-hand page, often threatening with their direct stares and blatant, if sometimes indeterminate, sexuality (fig. 5). On the left, across the gutter, appears a poem, complete on one page. On first approach, it is not clear exactly what this *Cave Birds* is. Shaped like a children's picture-book, though clearly nothing of the kind, it looks like an illustrated text—poems by Hughes to which Baskin has done pictures—and is talked of as such in the standard bibliography and by early commentators on the work (Sagar and Tabor 67).

Cave Birds, however, involves not only illustration (pictures on poems) but ekphrasis (poems on pictures), a different kind of collaborative relationship with a different history (Loizeaux 91–95). In 1974 Baskin, then living in Devon to be near Hughes, showed Hughes nine bird drawings; Hughes wrote nine poems on them (round A). Baskin then responded with 10 more drawings and Hughes with 10 more poems (round B). Hughes then wrote another 12 poems to which Baskin did 10 illustrations (round C). *Cave Birds* was composed, in other words, in three stages, two of ekphrasis and one of illustration.[11] But the division between ekphrasis and illustration is not so clear-cut. From the start, Baskin's images came with titles, his own acts of ekphrasis, so that Hughes's poems are both responses to Baskin's images and to his suggestive words about the images. As critics have noted, such titles as *A Hercules-in-the-Underworld Bird* (associated with the poem "The summoner") and *A Tumbled Socratic Cock* ("The accused") may well have set the initial direction for Hughes's epic anti-Socratic narrative. The same is true of round B. And round B is

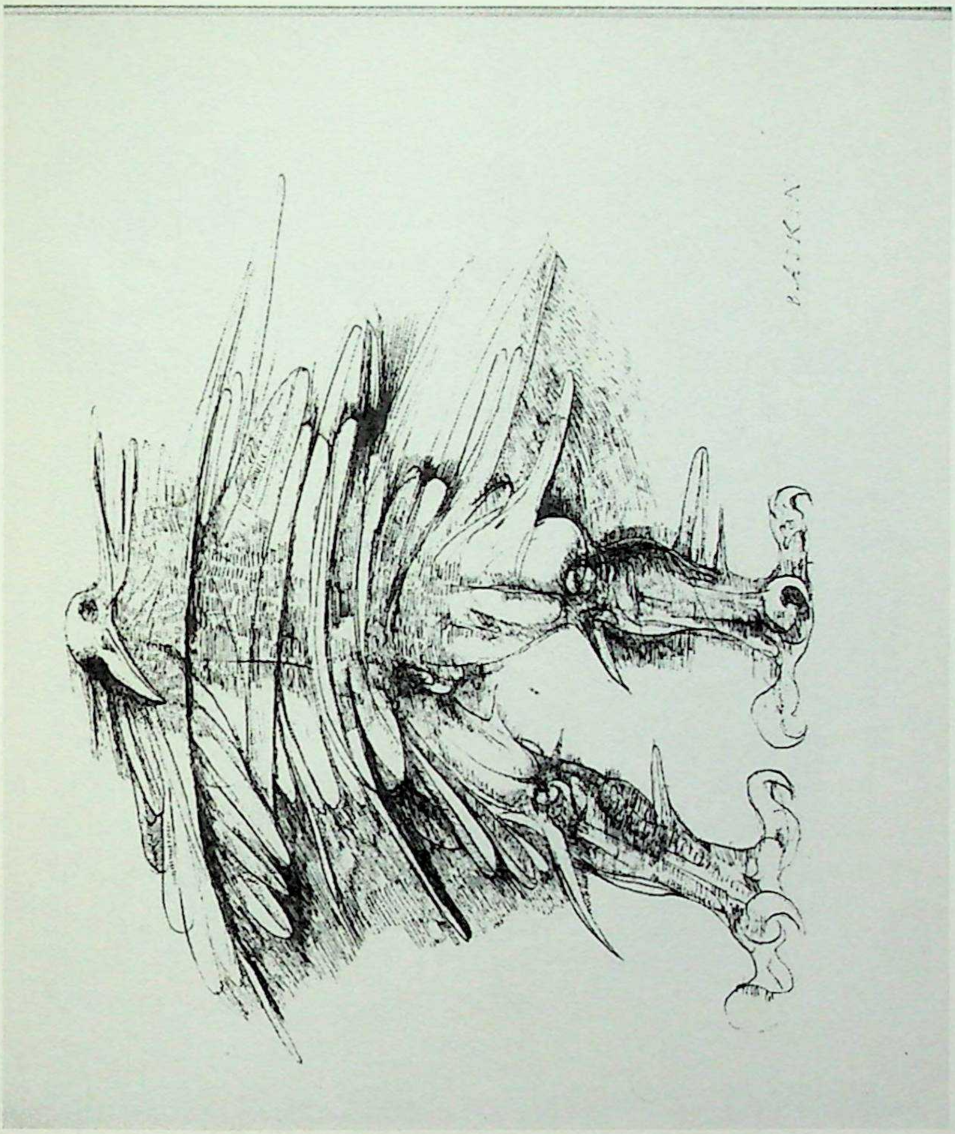

Figure 4. Drawing facing "The summoner."

further complicated: Baskin's pictures were done in response to Hughes's poems of round A, and so may be viewed as a species of illustration, or at least a visual extension of the verbal narrative those first poems set in motion. The picture of a crow's skeleton encircled by the remaining ribbons of (perhaps) tendons, originally titled *The Stone of Death* (corresponding with "The knight," discussed below; fig. 6) carries on the enumeration of death's processes begun in such poems from the first round as "The risen." And round C contains poems deeply rooted in both the verbal and visual texts already produced, poems that are ekphrastic as well as il-

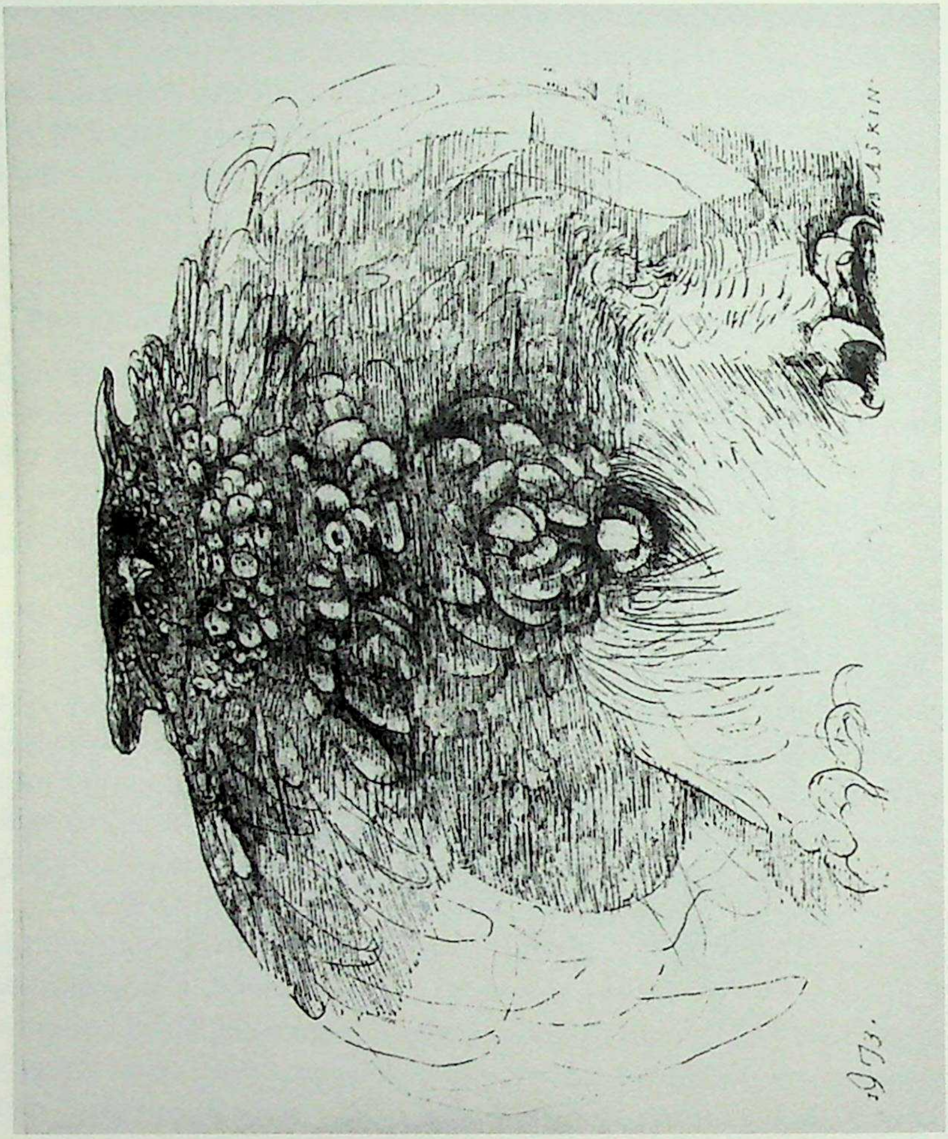

Figure 5. Drawing facing "The plaintiff."

lustrated. Poem-and-picture pairs from all three rounds are intermixed in the trade edition's arrangement into a narrative of transformation. As in Anne Sexton's *Transformations* (illustrated by Barbara Swan) and Charles Simic's *Dime Story Alchemy* (on the work of Joseph Cornell), *Cave Birds'* interplay of word and image on the page, and the collaboration behind it, figure that transformation implicitly and explicitly. The transformation of word to image (illustration) and image to word (ekphrasis) enacts the metaphorical alchemy of the volume's subtitle, *An Alchemical Cave Drama.*[12]

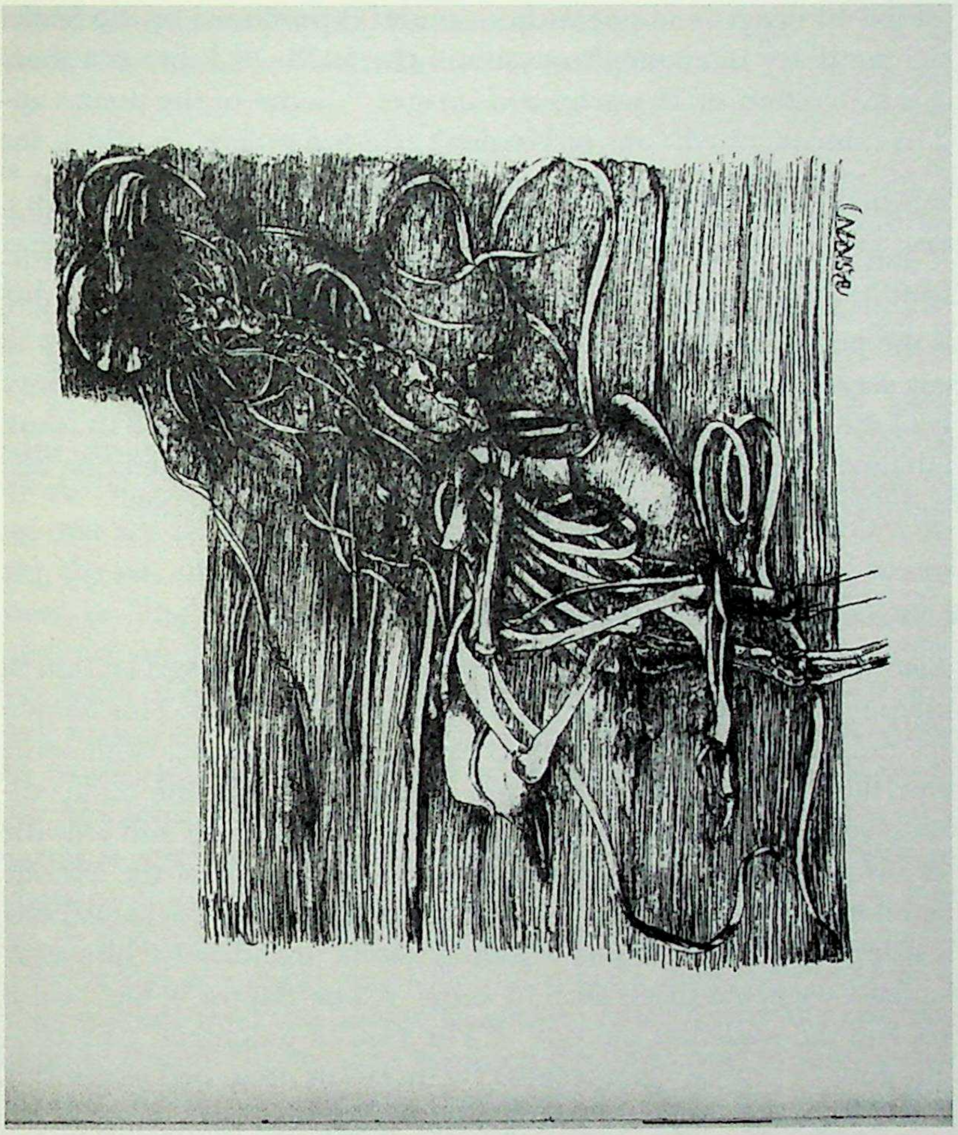

Figure 6. Drawing facing "The knight."

Like Yeats's, Hughes's oeuvre is notoriously unstable. He frequently revised individual poems after initial publication and even more frequently revised the contents of his poetic volumes. *Cave Birds* has an especially diverse textual life. Along the way and subsequent to the collaboration, *Cave Birds* was offered to the public in various forms: a commissioned performance at the 1975 Ilkley Literature Festival, where the poems were read in front of the images projected on a screen; shortly after, a BBC radio broadcast on 26 May 1975 in which Hughes read 30 poems with brief, explanatory comments connecting the narrative; a limited-edition book of the 10 images and poems from round B produced by the Scolar Press for the Ilkley Literature Festival; and the 1978–79 Faber & Faber/ Viking trade edition of 29 poems and images.[13] Some of the poems appeared in subsequent editions of Hughes's selected poems, in which the images and claims for their importance gradually leeched from the text.[14] The various incarnations contain various sets of the poems—some with images and some, as in the radio broadcast and selected poems, without—and in various orders. There is much to be said about the give and take as the poems were revised and recontextualized for presentation in different ways for different occasions, especially about the performative aspects of the Ilkley Literature Festival and the BBC broadcast. In terms of the dramatic interplay of word, image, and book, the trade edition and the magnificent Scolar Press limited edition are most suggestive.

The Scolar Press limited edition

Cave Birds was first presented to the world in print in a limited edition of 125 unbound books published by the Scolar Press in 1975. This edition contains only 10 poems, the round B poems, all ekphrastic. With some additions, these poems would form the central section of the trade edition three years later. It begins with the protagonist's death and tells the story of his progression through the tests and purgations of the afterlife and his rebirth into the world.[15] In the otherworld, the cockerel/crow hero is stripped bare, baptized in "winding waters" that dissolve him away "Like a hard-cornered grief, drop by drop" ("The Baptist"); his "soul is skinned, and the soul-skin laid out" ("The Hall of Judgment"); he confesses his guilt to heaven's gatekeeper ("yourself has confessed yourself"). This is not, for the most part, a gentle afterlife, but one, both pictures and poems tell us, inhabited by owls, eagles, and other predatory birds. It is an insistently physical place, bleak and threatening, alternately cold and hot: there are "the mountains of torment and mica," "the Arctic of stone," and "a red wind" and "the black wind, the longest wind / The headwind // To scour you." In "Incomparable Marriage," the hero's neglected, abused female partner—in Baskin's image, a huge eagle facing straight out at the viewer, filling the frame, screeching beak wide—confronts him:

> I meet you.
> For the audit. Your spellbound hours

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Hardwar-249404 (U.A.)

> Were a summoning. I have come.
> Your creditor—even like water from the rock.
>
> It is too late to pray. Too late to cry.

In the final poem, full of the imagery of rebirth, "Big terror descends," "A coffin spins on the torque. / Wounds flush with sap, headfull of pollen, / Wet with nectar" and the hero "Blinks at the source." "When everything that can fall has fallen / Something rises," as "The Guide" had earlier predicted.

One encounters this *Cave Birds* in a portfolio-style book, unbound pages set in a slim brown burlap-covered box secured by two sets of brown twill ties, thus joining the book form and the common carrying case for an artist's works on paper (fig. 7). It is huge (72.5 x 52.5 cm), the size of a kitchen table when open. One has to stand to heft the cover: reading it is a physical experience, in keeping with the volume's insistence on the physicality of all life, even after death. Photographs give little sense of how stunning this book is or what it feels like to read, using both hands, as one must, to lift and set aside page after page. Although the project had not yet acquired its subtitle, with its emphasis on drama (*An Alchemical Cave Drama*), the book requires one to read with large, theatrical gestures (especially stagey in the setting of the rare-book rooms where most copies are now housed). The images come first, as a group (fig. 8), laid sideways in the volume. They must be lifted out and turned to be looked at, emphasizing their individual nature, their status as works of art separate from the poems. They seem to tease with the possibility of framing: should one want to break up the collection to display them so that they can be easily seen, they are ready. At £125, well beyond the later trade edition's cost of £5.95, though not exorbitant, this book is aimed at the collectors' market.

While the order of the contents showcases the images, it also emphasizes the process of collaboration: first Baskin's pictures, then the poems Hughes wrote on them. One peels away all the pictures one by one to reveal the poems beneath, printed on 10 separate sheets, each folded once to make a four-page signature. The unbound folded sheets are enclosed in a folder set into a well in the center of the book's back cover (fig. 9). The poem booklet is one-half the size of a drawing, the size of a large book (35.2 x 50 cm). Each poem, moreover, is accompanied by a copy

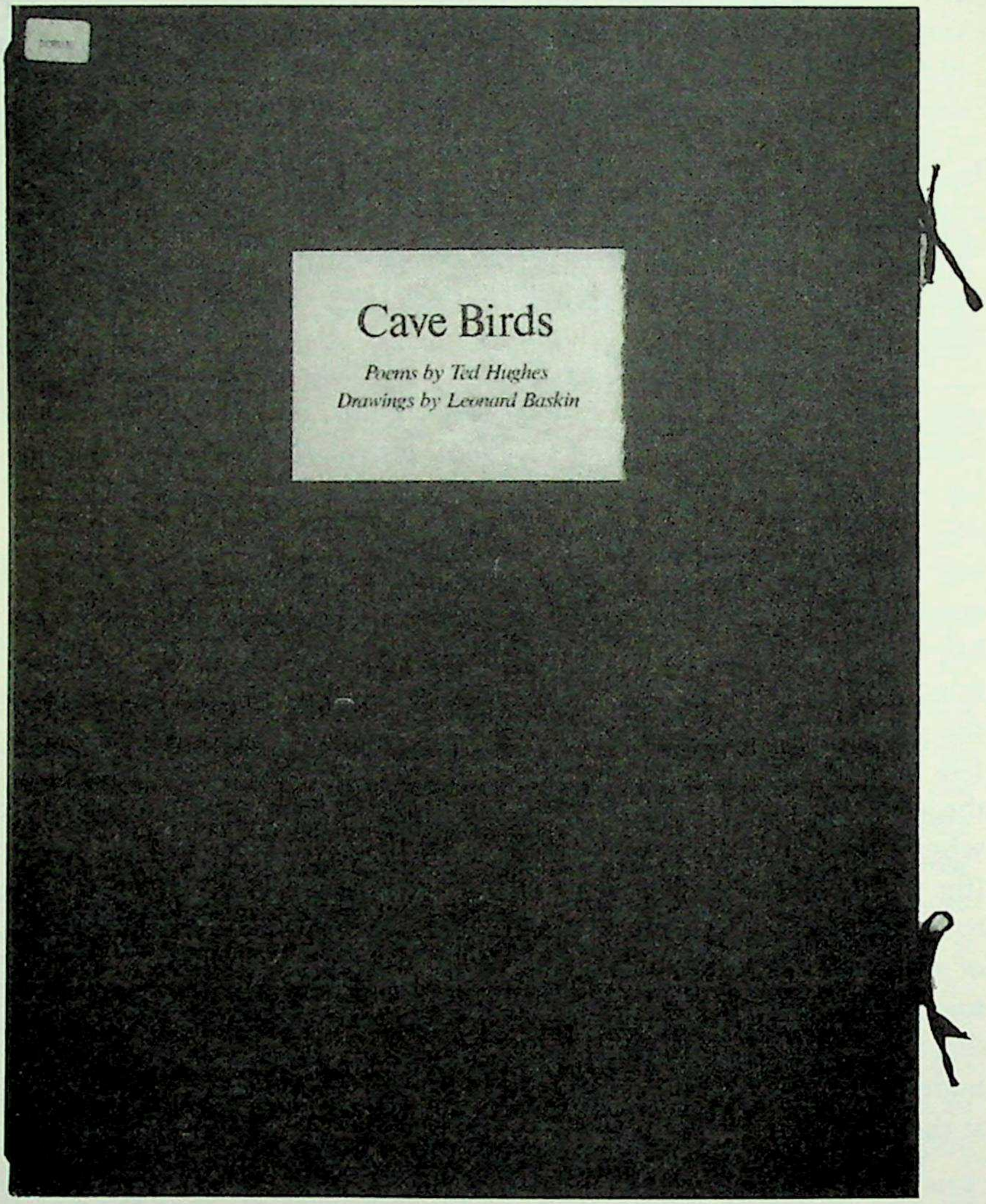

Cave Birds
Poems by Ted Hughes
Drawings by Leonard Baskin

Figure 7. Cover of the Scolar Press limited edition of *Cave Birds.*

of a holograph draft of the poem tipped in facing the printed poem on the inside of the folded sheet; some of the drafts, like the one in fig. 10, contain, among the words and in the margins, Hughes's own sketches of fantastical and real animals, suggesting how intimately pictures were involved in the process of these poems' composition and reminding us

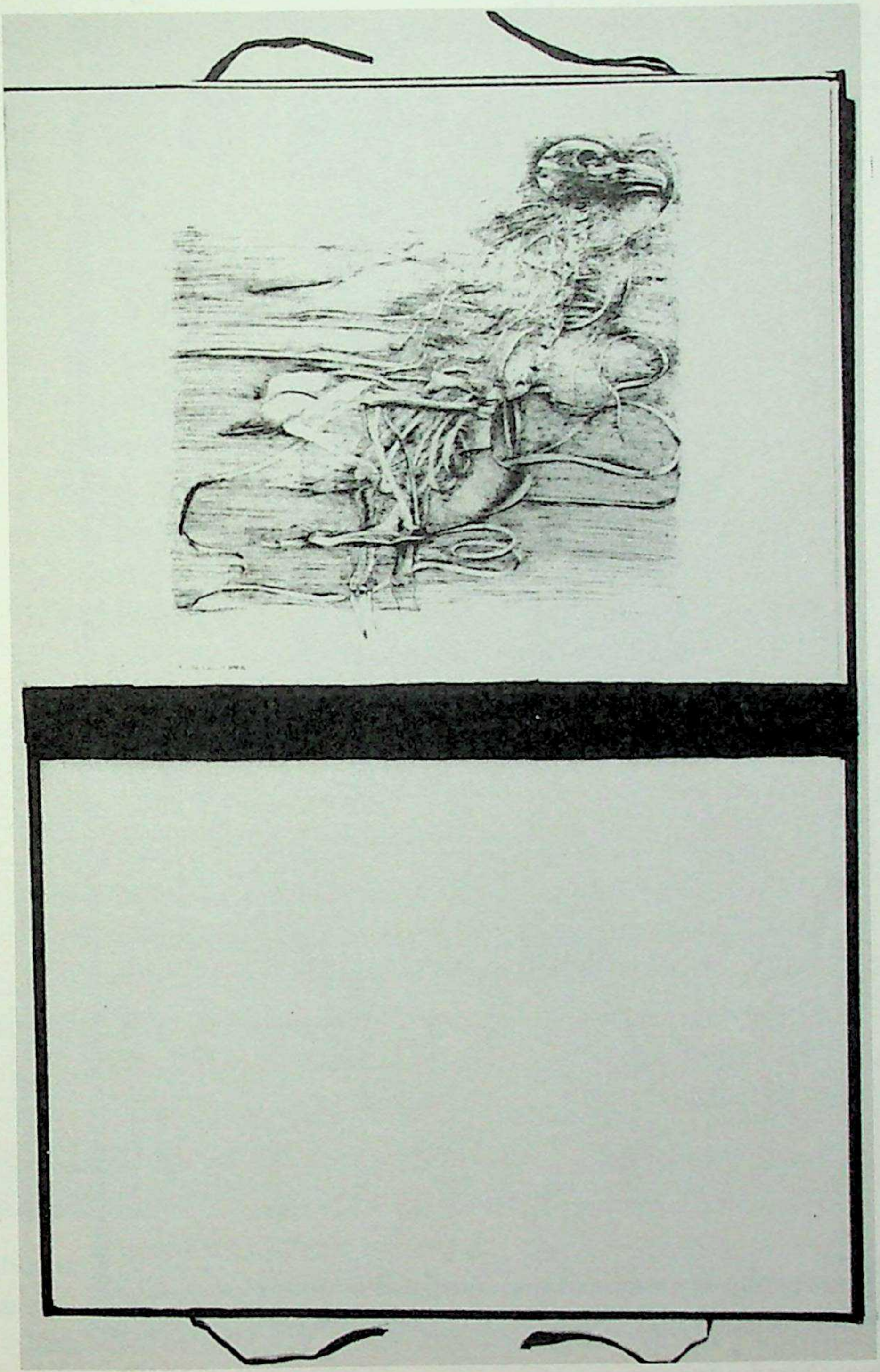


Figure 8. The Scolar Press limited edition of *Cave Birds* lying open to the first drawing.

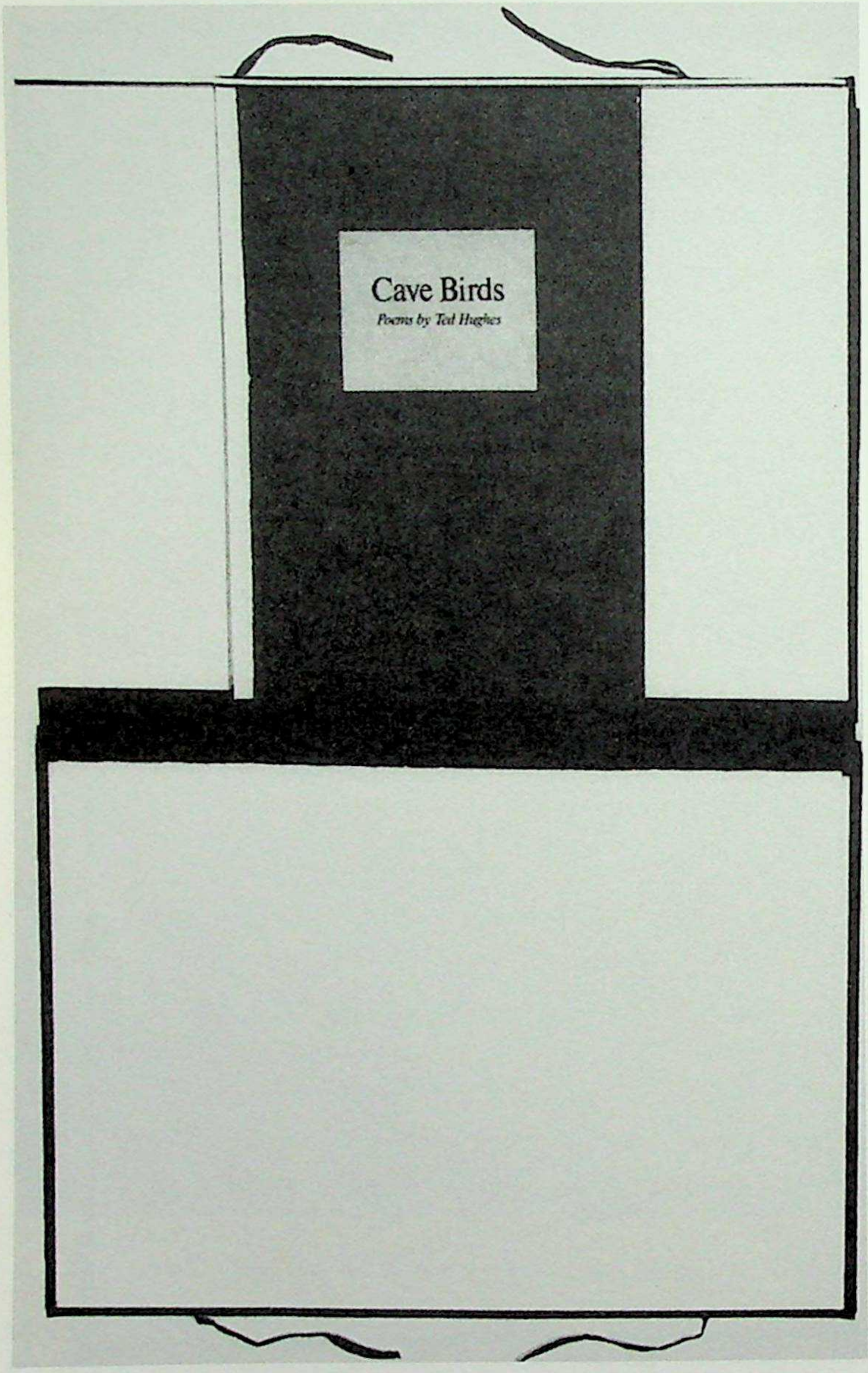
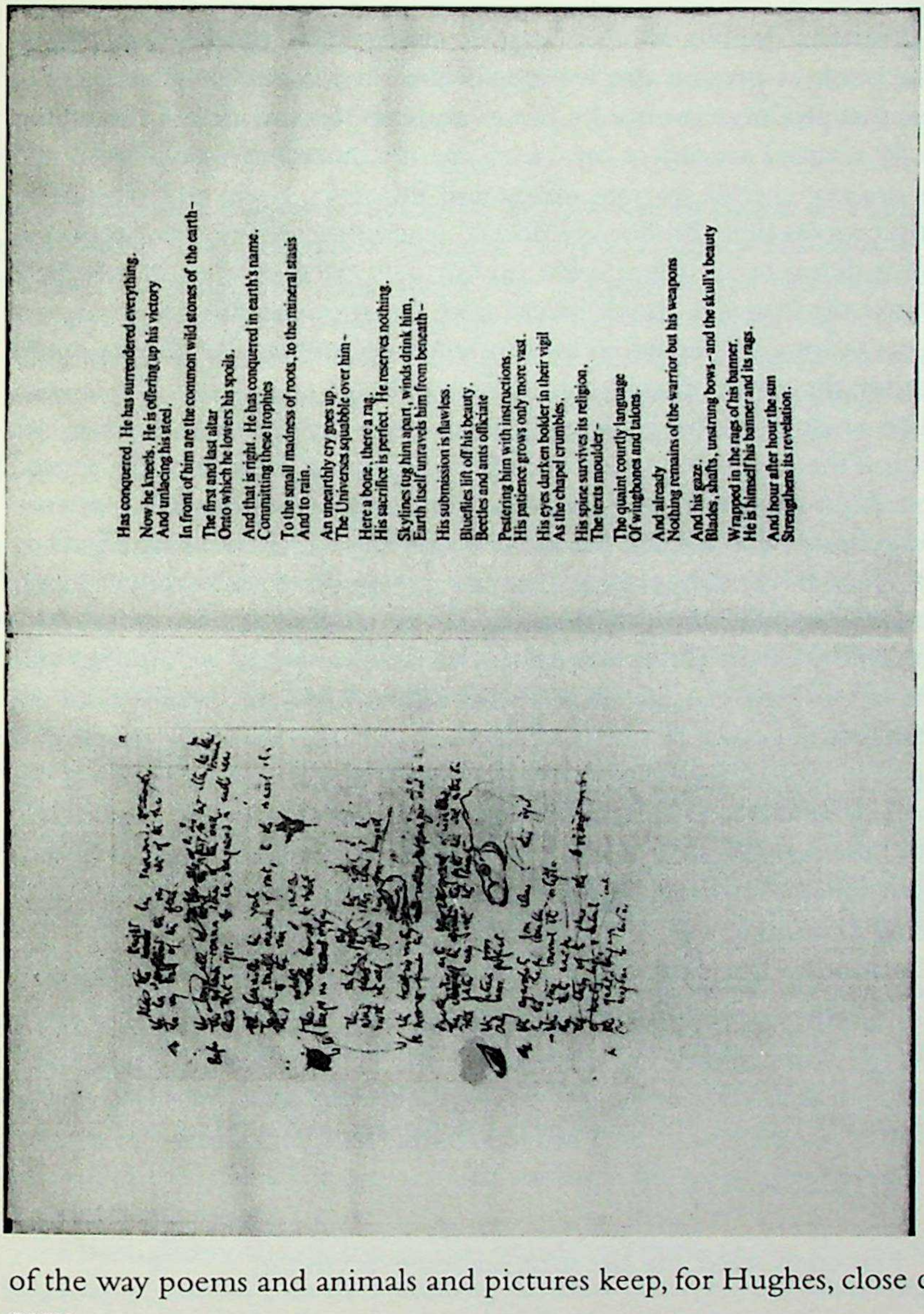

Cave Birds
Poems by Ted Hughes

Figure 9. The folder of poems in the well of the back cover of the Scolar Press limited edition of *Cave Birds.*



Has conquered. He has surrendered everything.

Now he kneels. He is offering up his victory
And unlacing his steel.

In front of him are the common wild stones of the earth –

The first and last altar
Onto which he lowers his spoils.

And that is right. He has conquered in earth's name.
Committing these trophies

To the small madness of roots, to the mineral stasis
And to rain.

An unearthly cry goes up.
The Universes squabble over him –

Here a bone, there a rag.
His sacrifice is perfect. He reserves nothing.

Skylines tug him apart, winds drink him,
Earth itself unravels him from beneath –

His submission is flawless.

Blueflies lift off his beauty.
Beetles and ants officiate

Pestering him with instructions.
His patience grows only more vast.

His eyes darken bolder in their vigil
As the chapel crumbles.

His spine survives its religion,
The texts moulder –

The quaint courtly language
Of wingbones and talons.

And already
Nothing remains of the warrior but his weapons

And his gaze.
Blades, shafts, unstrung bows – and the skull's beauty

Wrapped in the rags of his banner.
He is himself his banner and its rags.

And hour after hour the sun
Strengthens its revelation.

Figure 10. A poem spread ("The Knight") in the Scolar Press limited edition of *Cave Birds*. A copy of the holograph is tipped in verso.

of the way poems and animals and pictures keep, for Hughes, close company.

The volume's display of process highlights the very characteristic that makes this object valuable as art: it is the result of the handiwork of two artists. The book authenticates itself as having been made by hand by displaying part of the process of that making. The collaboration displayed thus advertises double value, an artistic twofer. But the book-as-object and the book-as-process also work against each other here: the display of process that produces the book's pieces undermines the idea of the whole, perfectly realized art object on which the art market is based. Word and image are not bound, nor are image and image or word and word. The reading process that the book enforces—standing, lifting the pages out, maybe walking to set them aside on another table—defies in exaggerated ways the "do not touch" dictum of fine-art viewing. And what it produces is not a whole but an assortment of fragments spread out around the reader, the result of reading as disassembling.

The book's tension between product and process may suggest the artist's and the poet's uneasiness with the ideological freight of the limited edition, so at odds with the scrappy, undecorative world of the poems. And one finds evidence that the book resists its own status as art object in other aspects of its bibliographic features as well: the antiart brown burlap cover, for example, whose color and texture underscore the poems' attention to the earthy physicality of the hero's disintegration. Hughes and Baskin try to walk the fine line, as did William Morris, between an art that brings the power of the handmade object into the daily world and the need to recoup the costs (and maybe even make some money on the venture) by selling to collectors. As with most books from fine presses, the tension between the book as work of art and the book as common object, between what you shouldn't touch and what you must touch, between admiring and using, is part of the reading experience itself.

On another level, one can read the construction and arrangement of this *Cave Birds* as an embodiment of the book's concern with the halting process of decomposition that marks the transition from life into the uncertain state beyond. The volume opens with the cockerel hero's death (figs. 8 and 10) in the collaboration's finest poem, which begins:

> THE KNIGHT
>
> Has conquered. He has surrendered everything.
>
> Now he kneels. He is offering up his victory
> And unlacing his steel.
>
> In front of him are the common wild stones of the earth—

> The first and last altar
> Onto which he lowers his spoils.
>
> And that is right. . . .

Identifying the cockerel's decaying body with the physical book, the poem shows how "the texts moulder" to reveal "the quaint courtly language / Of wingbones and talons," the language of the body itself. The disintegration of the cockerel's body, as "Skylines tug him apart, winds drink him, / Earth itself unravels him from beneath," suggestively echoes one's own reading of the book as one lifts and spreads out its pieces, sheets of pictures and of poems, disassembling the body of the book until only the case remains.

The texts may "moulder" in the poem, but disintegration does not produce complete decomposition, either in the narrative or the book. "His spine survives its religion," and among the ruins one finds "Here a bone, there a rag," recalling Yeats's "foul rag and bone shop of the heart" where all creation starts, and through that, the nineteenth-century shops that sold rags for the paper used in fine printing.[16] Out of old rags come new books. The detritus of the knight's body contains the material for a new body/book; "In the house of the dead are many cradles," says Hughes's "Loyal Mother." This is the hope Hughes holds out for the knight and also, perhaps, for himself as a poet. For readers of this book, the process of reading as disassembling will inevitably be followed by reassembling, though folding all back into the slipcase cannot be the radical reintegration Hughes has in mind for his hero.

Understanding the relation between word and image in this edition of *Cave Birds* is a particular challenge precisely because of the volume's fragmentation. But there is a list correlating the titles of the images with the titles of the poems, and its presence suggests that an effort is expected, perhaps even that the correlation of word and image has something to do with the narrative's insistence that the hero discover his relation to his neglected other half.

Throughout the volume, the words, written about the pictures (ekphrasis), establish an ever-shifting relation between the narrative and the images, keeping the reading unsettled, questioning. First-, second-, and third-person voices record the shifting relation and distance between reader, speaker, protagonist, and bird, playing out a drama of identification that implicates all in the passage through death. Sometimes the image is identified as the hero ("The Knight") and described from a safe distance in the third person. Sometimes the image is identified as one of the agents of the otherworld ("The Baptist," "The Gatekeeper"). Sometimes, in an act of prosopopeia, the bird as agent of the otherworld speaks directly to us in the first person, identifying us with the flayed and guilty hero. And sometimes the bird is the hero himself and speaks in lyrical self-expression: "A blot has knocked me down. It clogs me. / A globe of blot, a drop of unbeing" ("The Hall of Judgment"). One might read these shifting relations both as the effort of the poet to keep the ekphrastic project fresh by approaching the image in a variety of ways and as part of the signifying work of the image-text. The constantly shifting distance among its terms suggests the psychological dance as the hero struggles to come to terms with death and embrace the female other. If in ekphrasis, as recent discussions of the poetic genre agree, the word confronts its visual semiotic other (Heffernan; Mitchell, *Picture Theory*), we might then read Hughes's ekphrasis here as a process that is analogous to that required of the volume's hero. The powerful effect of these shifts in relation cannot be felt in the absence of the images.

The poems and pictures of *Cave Birds* are, often wittily, interactive. In none of its textual incarnations does *Cave Birds* attempt a seamless verbal-visual textuality, for all that Blake's composite pages may lie behind the endeavor. Throughout, word and image occupy their own space. What interests Baskin and Hughes is relation across difference: words and images orbit each other, held in active tension, exchanging across the gap.

The poems are playfully aware of themselves as poems on images. "A blot has knocked me down," for example, describes the black oval, interpreted in the poem as an egg, in which Baskin's flayed crow is encased (fig. 11). "Or am I under attention?" he asks, which, of course, he is—from us and from Hughes. Hughes puns on the image: the crow calls what is at the center of the oval/egg "This yoke of afterlife." Light and darkness in the poems are deployed with their conventional associations of knowledge and ignorance but refer, of course, also to the black and white of the drawings. On one level these are, with a few dabs of color here and there, the colors of the afterworld presented in the poems as well, so that chromatically poem and picture together present an image of the afterlife. On another level the poems thematize looking, playing on the convention of sight as a way to knowledge. The necessary preparation for revelation is for the hero, as for other spiritual questers, a stripping bare of the self, until, in Hughes's version, "Nothing remains of the war-

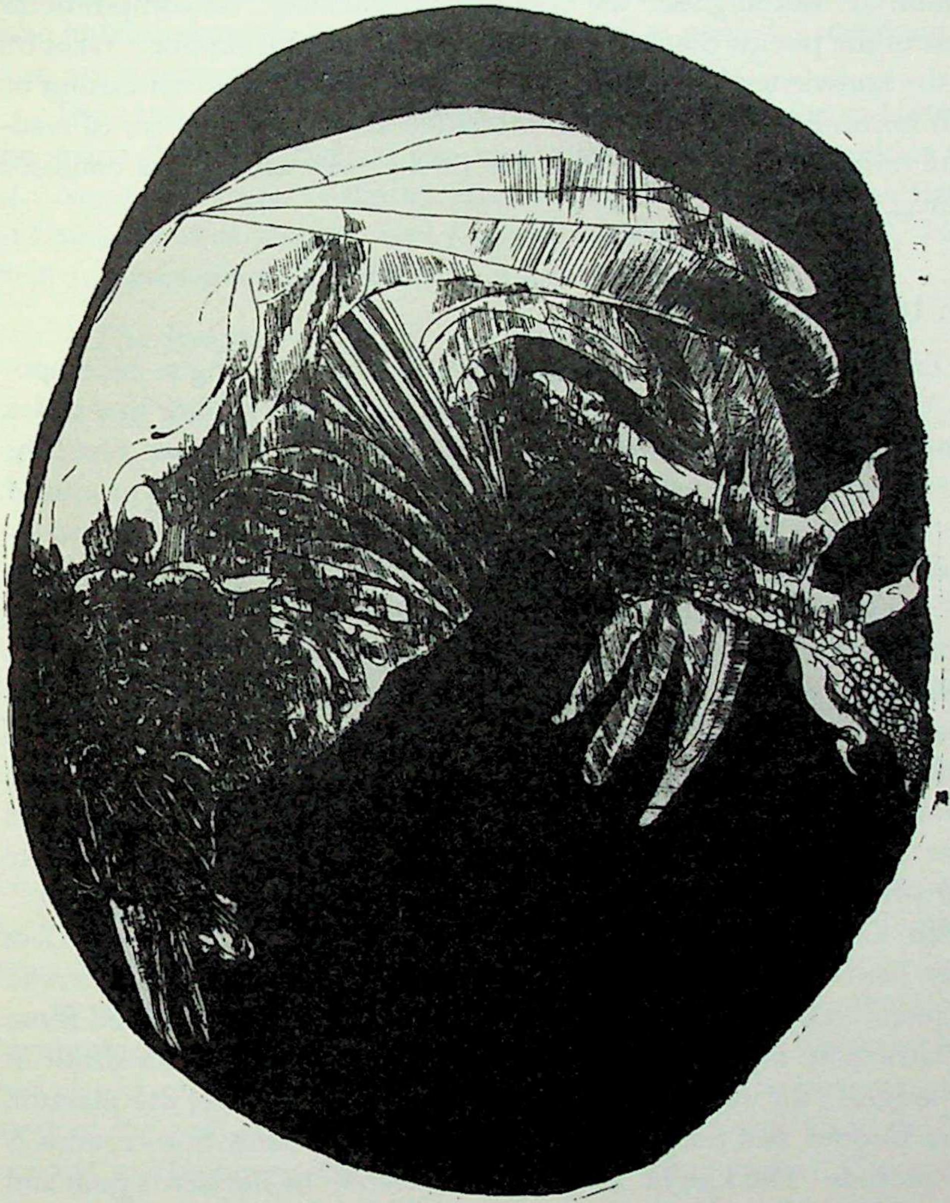


Figure 11. Drawing corresponding with "The Hall of Judgment."

rior but his weapons // And his gaze." "His eyes darken bolder in their vigil" we're told, "As the chapel crumbles" ("The Knight"). In "The Hall of Judgment," "Darkness," the state in which sight cannot happen, is the condition of "nothingness," the opposite of revelation. The compositional process of the poems themselves begins with looking; ekphrasis takes off from the knowledge attained by observation. While the reader cannot be said to become the quester of the narrative, in the difficult act of reading the limited-edition *Cave Birds,* he or she lives some of its confused searching.

The trade edition

If the limited edition emphasizes fragmentation and reading as decomposition, the trade edition, binding word and image face to face in a codex volume, emphasizes reunion. The fullest elaboration of *Cave Birds,* the 1978–79 trade edition, contains all of the poems and drawings produced, except one each from rounds A and C. The poems and pictures are arranged narratively, not in order of composition. The three rounds are blended, ekphrasis and illustration interspersed throughout the volume, further complicating the shifts in relations suggested in the limited edition. With the exception of the first poem, which is not accompanied by a picture (more on this below), poems and pictures are paired, poem on the left, picture on the right. Bound on the short side, 28.25 cm x 22.5 cm, smaller than a coffee-table picture book but larger than the usual volume of poems, this book is a hybrid like the image-text itself and like the bird-humans of Baskin's drawings.

This *Cave Birds,* as the new subtitle suggests (*An Alchemical Cave Drama*), conceives of the volume as a stage. To the cast of characters in the limited edition (the knight, the baptist, etc.) have been added those who participate in the trial that leads up to the protagonist's death in "The knight": the summoner, the interrogator, the judge, the plaintiff, the executioner, and the accused himself. Eleven poems from rounds A and C precede "The knight" and stage a revelation of the hero's guilt and his trial.[17] The poems from the limited edition dramatizing the hero's experiences in the afterlife are slightly reordered and augmented by six interspersed poems from round C. Two poems from round A conclude the volume: "The risen," in which the hero stands before us magnificently reborn as a falcon, and the two-line "Finale," which impishly casts doubt on the hero's triumph: "At the end of the ritual / up comes a goblin." The cast of characters in this *Cave Birds,* the narrative makes clear, cannot be seen as external to the hero, as they might have been in the limited edition, but must be read as the fragmented parts of his inner psychic life who judge and condemn him to death as well as guide his remaking. This is an interior drama of transformation, a "cave drama."

The ekphrastic poems of round A, which often describe and interpret the image directly (a fact not apparent without the images) provide some of *Cave Birds'* greatest delights. Here is Hughes's satiric characterization of Baskin's comic plucked bird (originally titled *An Oven-Ready Piranha Bird*) as representative of Western justice (fig. 12):

> **The judge**
>
> The pondering body of the law teeters across
> A web-glistening geometry.
>
> Lolling, he receives and transmits
> Cosmic equipoise.
>
> The garbage-sack of everything that is not
> The Absolute onto whose throne he lowers his buttocks.
>
> Clowning, half-imbecile,
> A Nero of the unalterable. (16)

Hughes's couplets teeter and loll, creating their own "cosmic equipoise" in each end-stopped couplet, comically echoing this grotesque bird's labored steps on the wide-planted, gnarled legs that support his immense body.

In much more obvious and complex ways in the trade edition, autobiographical concern is generalized into an analysis of Western culture and played out in mythological and historical terms. The purging and rebirth of the guilty hero from the limited edition are now set in the larger context of Hughes's cultural critique. The opening poem, "The scream," sets out the problem as manifested in the main character, the cockerel, who has led a life of complacent self-satisfaction:

> Mountains lazed in their smoky camp.
> Worms in the ground were doing a good job.

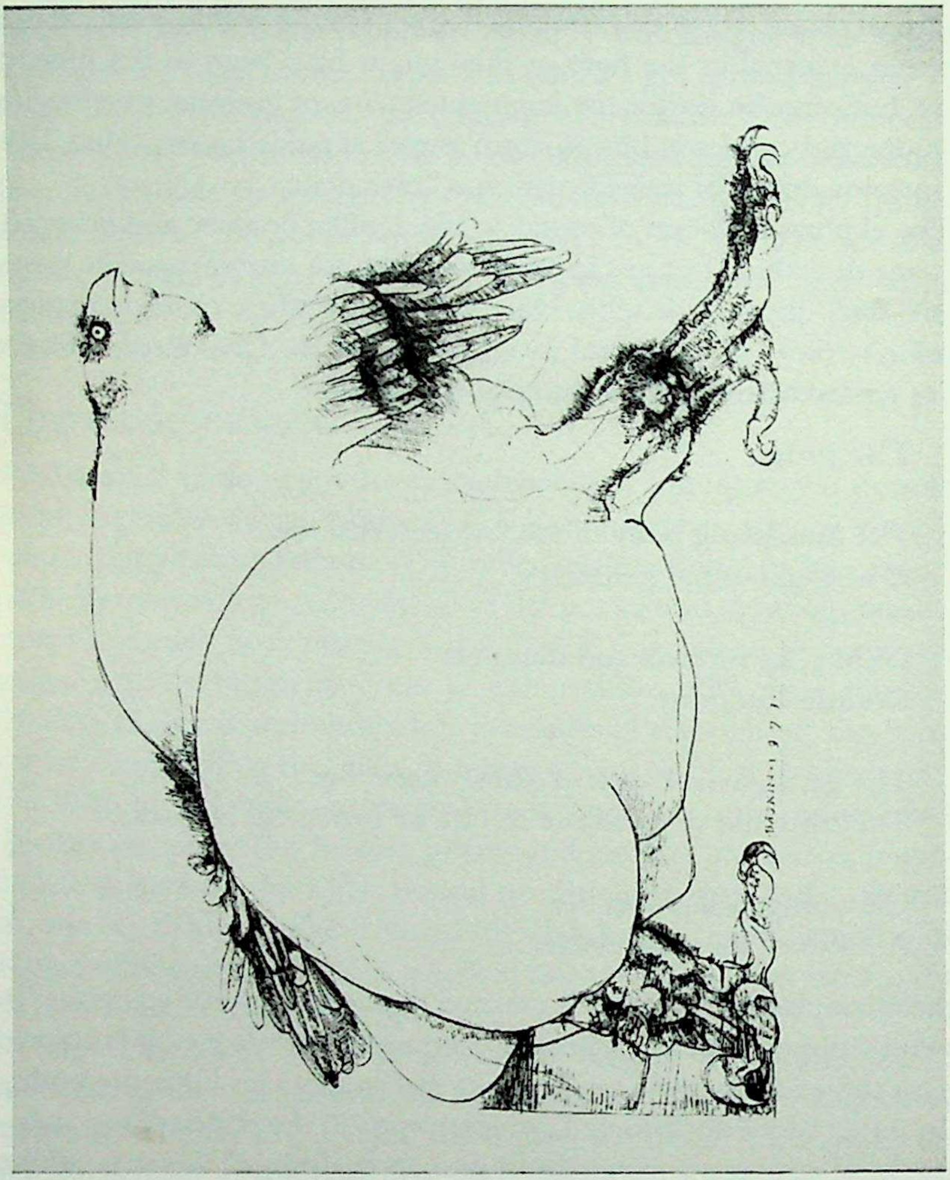


Figure 12. Drawing facing "The judge."

Flesh of bronze, stirred with a bronze thirst,
Like a newborn baby at the breast,
Slept in the sun's mercy.

And the inane weights of iron
That come suddenly crashing into people, out of nowhere,
Only made me feel brave and creaturely.

> When I saw little rabbits with their heads crushed on roads
> I knew I rode the wheel of the galaxy. (7)

Dissociation of sensibility under the pressure of Western abstraction is for Hughes, as for Lawrence, the tragedy of modern man: the rational has suppressed the nonrational human capacities, the mind has gained ascendency over the body, empathy has given way to the exercise of power. "The psychological stupidity, the ineptitude, of the rigidly rationalist outlook—it's a form of hubris, and we're paying the traditional price," Hughes said (Fass 200). The hero of *Cave Birds* cracks under the strain of his own pride; he is brought up short at the end of the poem, suddenly unable to talk, bereft of the language that had allowed him to rationalize and so evade "the inane weights of iron," life's tragedies. He tries to speak, but "a silence wedged my gullet." He can voice only a primal cry: "The scream / Vomited itself."

As this poem suggests, language, for Hughes, has been the instrument of the rationality that distances feeling and suppresses the physical life of the body. In the anti-Socratic argument, central not only to *Cave Birds* but to his larger poetic project, "idealistic attempts to isolate abstract conceptual principles" have historically worked by "identifying Good with God as Logos," as Graham Bradshaw succinctly puts it (215). This is a familiar formulation, and throughout Western history it has been routinely accompanied, as scholars have shown (Mitchell, *Iconology;* Paulson; and Gilman, for example), with a valuation of the image as the word's challenging opposite. In the history of Western discourse about the arts, the image as present, replete, silent, and irrational contends with the logical, symbolic, and "civilizing" discipline of the word. "The history of culture," comments W. J. T. Mitchell, "is in part the story of a protracted struggle for dominance between pictorial and linguistic sign" (*Iconology* 43). Fear of the power of the image (and what it might make people do) underlies the periodic episodes of iconoclasm that mark Western history (see Freedberg), including, of course, the Reformation, the origin for Hughes of modern dissociation. In their bodiliness, images make men desert rationality in favor of base instinct. The dichotomy is routinely gendered: "Time [language] is a Man Space [image] is a Woman," Blake said (qtd. in Mitchell, *Iconology* 95), echoing the common cultural notions that lie behind the most influential attempt to delineate the differences between the arts, Gotthold Lessing's 1766 *Laocoön*. Such thinking is so pervasive that the conventional figuring of the image as female and subversive can be seen in the criticism of *Cave Birds* itself. Explaining what he finds the uneven quality of the poems in the volume, one critic remarks, "the story, seduced no doubt by Baskin's drawings, seems to lose its way, dissipating the energy" (Sagar, *Art* 179). "The decorum of the arts at bottom has to do with proper sex roles," explains Mitchell, glossing the underpinnings of Lessing's argument that words and images should stick to their own spheres (*Iconology* 109).

The terms in which the hero's problems are posed in the trade edition, and the insistent pairing that the layout and binding enforce, ask that we read the general relation of word and image in the context of this larger history of discourse about the arts. Baskin and Hughes pursue their narrative of modern humanity not by overturning the terms of the conventional dichotomies but by calling attention to and using them; the book itself dichotomizes—poems on the left, pictures on the right. Simultaneously, however, the binding and the layout urge the prescribed cure by setting word and image (mind and body, male and female) in relation and challenging us to read the exchange between them. Hughes's desire to join his words to images participates in a common sense among twentieth-century poets that images have an immediate embodied presence that language lacks. In "The scream," Hughes's victim is all words with no image because he is the logical conclusion to centuries of rationalizing language misguidedly valued as the good and powerful, and of the concomitant denigration of the image. The reader turns the page, the trial begins, and there stands Baskin's summoner (fig. 4) on the right, a harsh corrective, "Spectral, gigantified, / Protozoic, blood-eating" (8), looking down on the reader, feathers stiffening into daggers, baroque talons menacing, demanding attention by his sheer physicality to the animal life the hero has criminally disregarded. As he calls the hero to account ("Sooner or later— / The grip"), the spread dramatizes the confrontation: image as body stands up to mind as word. In this *Cave Birds,* there is no turning aside from Baskin's often sexually charged, physically confrontational images. They dominate every subsequent spread. Sometimes Baskin manipulates the angle of vision to position us at groin level, staring straight at the genitals of his human birds (figs. 4 and 5), testing response to such blatant displays of the body.

Some of the poem-picture pairs thematize the opposition of thought and body. The image functions as concrete corrective to the hero's verbal rationalizing. When the protagonist gathers himself in the third poem,

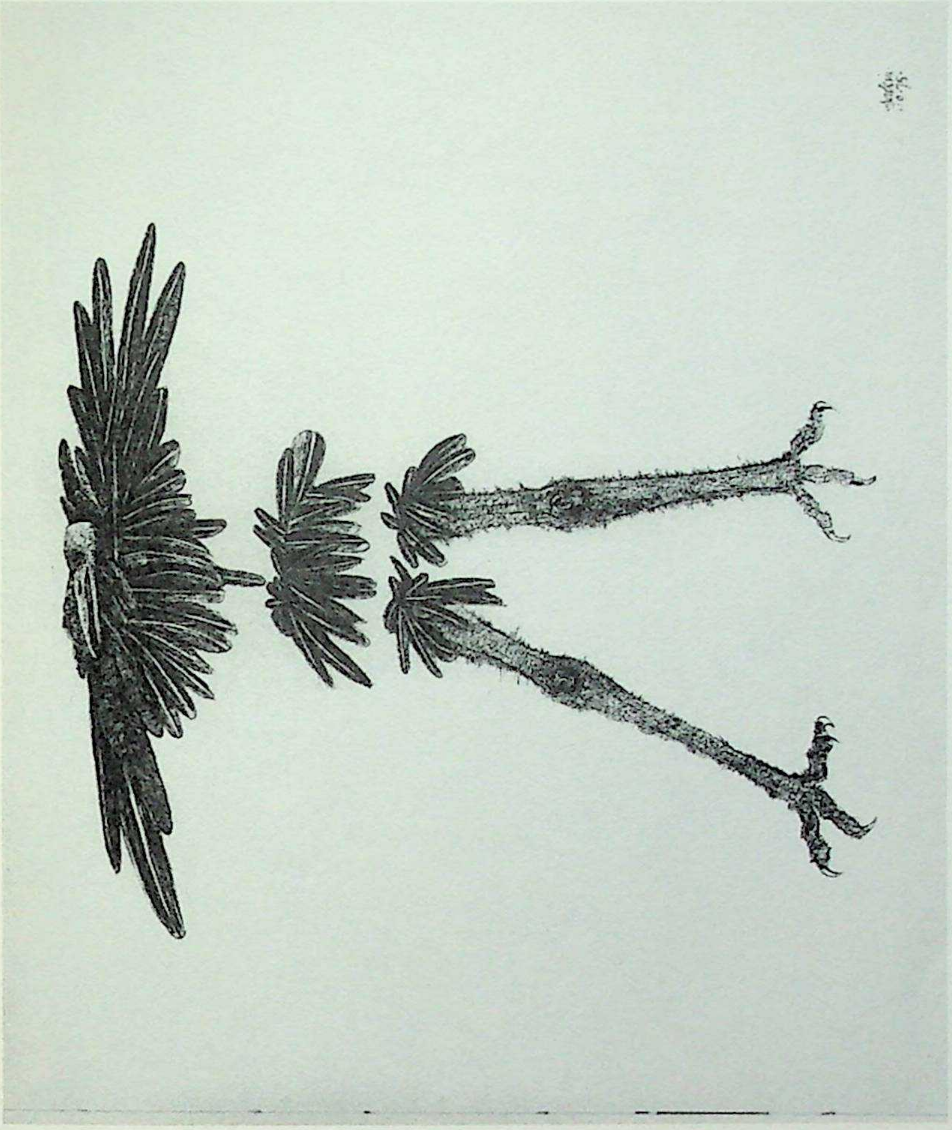


Figure 13. Drawing facing "After the first fright."

"After the first fright," from round C—"I sat up and took stock of my options. / I argued my way out of every thought anybody could think" (10)—there is Baskin's bird as the body damaged by such rationalizing (fig. 13). The protagonist's linguistic evasions, full of the capitalized pieties of Enlightenment thought, are met by the illustration's insistence on physical torment as their price, the dismemberment of Baskin's bird.

> When I said: "Civilization,"
> He began to chop off his fingers and mourn.

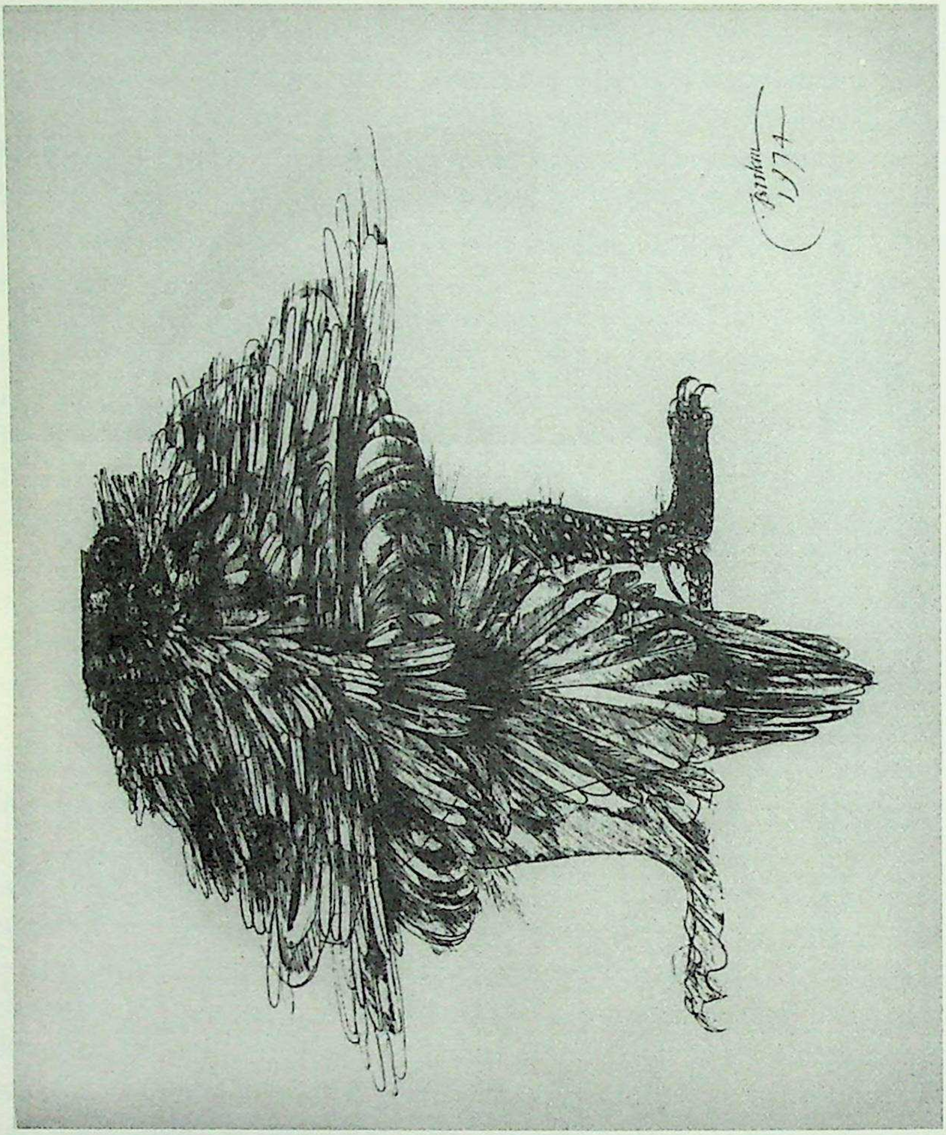


Figure 14. Drawing facing "The gatekeeper."

> When I said: "Sanity and again Sanity and above all Sanity,"
> He disembowelled himself with a cross-shaped cut.

Later in the narrative, in "The gatekeeper," when "remorse, promises, a monkey chatter" (32) blurt "from every orifice" of the hero, the play of word and image in the codex (unlike the limited edition) emphasizes his attempt to talk his way out of death as a last-ditch effort to make rationalizing logos work against the physicality of life insisted on by Baskin's bird (fig. 14).

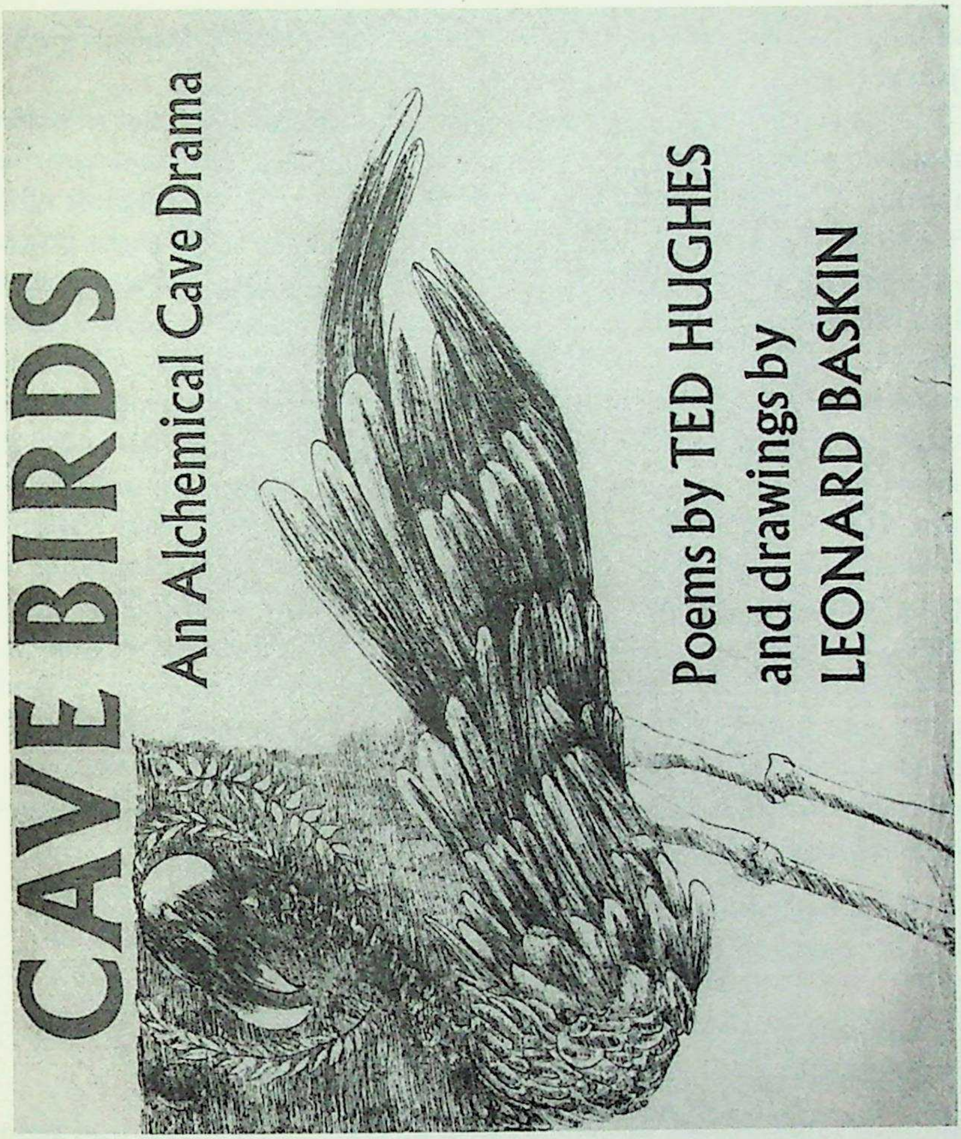

CAVE BIRDS
An Alchemical Cave Drama
Poems by TED HUGHES
and drawings by
LEONARD BASKIN

Figure 15. The dust jacket of *Cave Birds.*

The body's active presence also figures in other aspects of the volume's bibliographic features. Less dramatically than the limited edition, but nevertheless insistently, this book calls attention to its physicality. Awkwardly rectangular, bound on the short side, it flops open in the hands, is difficult to hold, and defies the usual physical balance of a modern open book. Like the spread-winged raptor on the frontispiece, its covers flap wide. The colors (deep cream paper, drawings and type in black ink, bound in black, covered with a paper-bag-brown dust jacket printed in black and blood red) insist on earthiness, as does the thick, matte texture of paper and jacket (fig. 15).

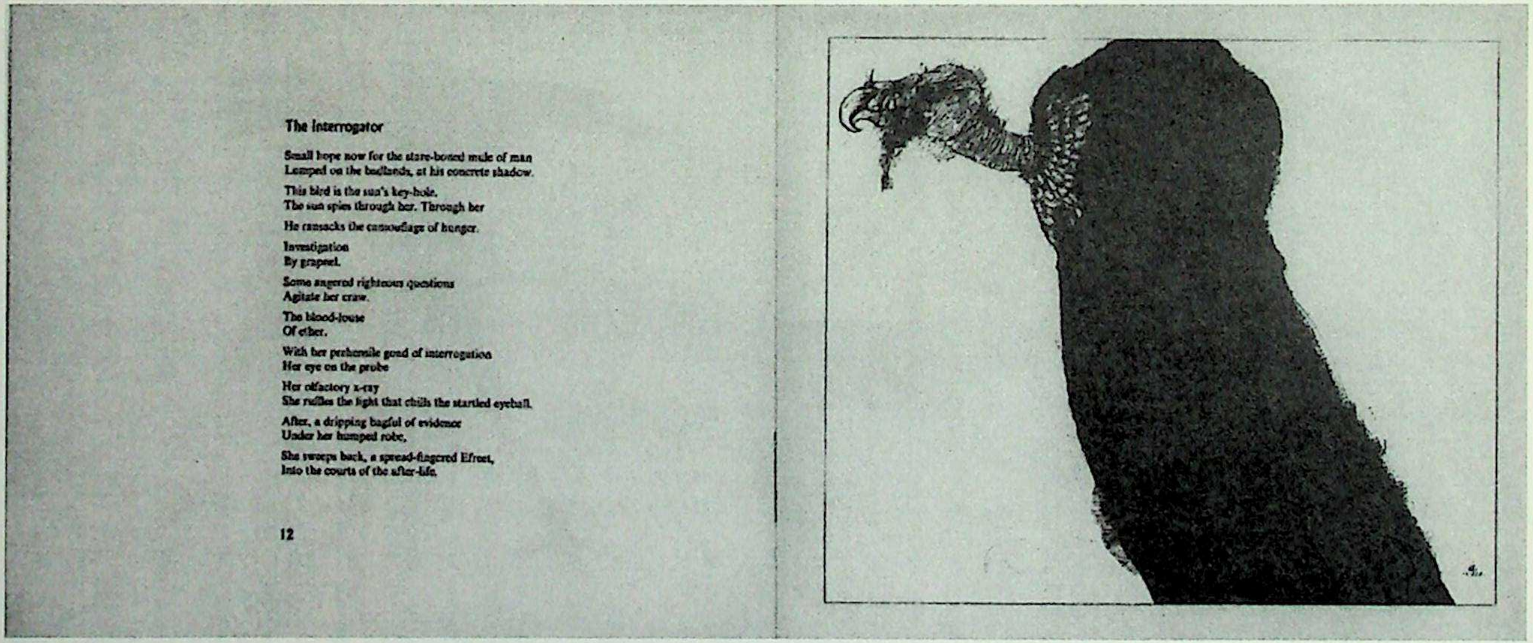
The trade edition develops the narrative of the female other in seven of the added poems, detailing most importantly (in two ekphrastic poems from round A) her roles as the wronged plaintiff and the interrogator who will make the case against the hero. But while the narrative urges union with the female other, Hughes's treatment of the images in these poems lays bare the volume's disturbing gynophobia. Exercising the license given ekphrasis to do what it will with the image, Hughes takes two of Baskin's most threatening images of raptors and genders them female, as he also did with two images from round B that appeared in the limited edition ("A Loyal Mother," "Incomparable Marriage). Probably working off the original title of the image, *A Titled Vultress,* Hughes describes Baskin's vultress—solidly, implacably black on the page (fig. 16)—as carrying "a dripping bagful of evidence / Under her humped robe" (12). The witty description of her body as "the sun's key-hole" also suggests voyeurism and the vaginal threat that echoes back to "Crow's First Lesson": "And woman's vulva dropped over man's neck and tightened" (*Crow* 20). Hughes's vultress makes clear that there is "Small hope now for the stare-boned mule of man / Lumped on the badlands." The forceful spondees convey the inevitability of her intentions:

> With her prehensile goad of interrogation
> Her eye on the probe
>
> Her olfactory x-ray
> She ruffles the light that chills the startled eyeball.

Turning the tables on the conventional male gaze, the vultress uses sight (so often the agent of knowledge in this book) with scientific precision to locate and drag up the truth: "Investigation / By grapnel."

In "The plaintiff," Hughes turns Baskin's ambiguously gendered owl—spread out with breast feathers threateningly engorged (fig. 5)—into the protagonist's suppressed other, come to claim her own:

> Her feathers are leaves, the leaves tongues,
> The mouths wounds, the tongues flames
>
> The feet
> Roots



The Interrogator

Small hope now for the stare-boned mule of man
Lumped on the badlands, at his concrete shadow.

This bird is the sun's key-hole.
The sun spies through her. Through her

He ransacks the camouflage of hunger.

Investigation
By grapnel.

Some angered righteous questions
Agitate her craw.

The blood-louse
Of ether.

With her prehensile goad of interrogation
Her eye on the probe

Her olfactory x-ray
She rifles the light that chills the startled eyeball.

After, a dripping bagful of evidence
Under her humped robe,

She sweeps back, a spread-fingered Efreet,
Into the courts of the after-life.

12

Figure 16. "The interrogator." Spread in *Cave Birds.*

> Buried in your chest, a humbling weight
> That will not let you breathe.
>
> Your heart's winged flower
> Come to supplant you. (18)

The sexual suggestiveness of Baskin's bird is heightened by Hughes into a fantasy of erotic asphyxiation. These poems seem to participate willfully and with sadomasochistic pleasure in the long ekphrastic tradition of fear of the (female) image most vividly played out in Shelley's "On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery," where the gorgon's image exercises such power that she "turns the gazer's spirit into stone."

The narrative of *Cave Birds* climaxes in "Bride and groom lie hidden for three days," where the flayed and purified protagonist is reassembled in union with the neglected female in a ritual alchemical marriage. In Hughes's poem, the predatory female seems to have melted away, presumably because the hero has accepted her as part of himself, but in Baskin's illustration (fig. 17, a product of round C, in which Baskin illustrated Hughes's poems) her powerful legs and torso and impossibly pneumatic breasts pull against the poem's lyricism. The poem charts a dance of mutual remaking as male and female create each other out of the world's refuse:

> She gives him his eyes, she found them
> Among some rubble, among some beetles
>
> He gives her her skin
> He just seemed to pull it down out of the air
> and lay it over her (56)

In a sexualizing of Yeats's vow to "lie down" in the "foul rag and bone shop of the heart," male creation reciprocates female as "they bring each other to perfection," "gasping with joy, with cries of wonderment." The sparsity of punctuation is as headlong as any of Dickinson's dashes. The visual pattern of urgently overlapping lines expresses the intertwining of their making, repeated in the horizontal reach of the bird man's outstretched leg across the thigh of the bird woman in Baskin's illustration, where their feathers are nearly all stripped away, showing the human features beneath, making explicit the volume's presiding anthropomorphism.

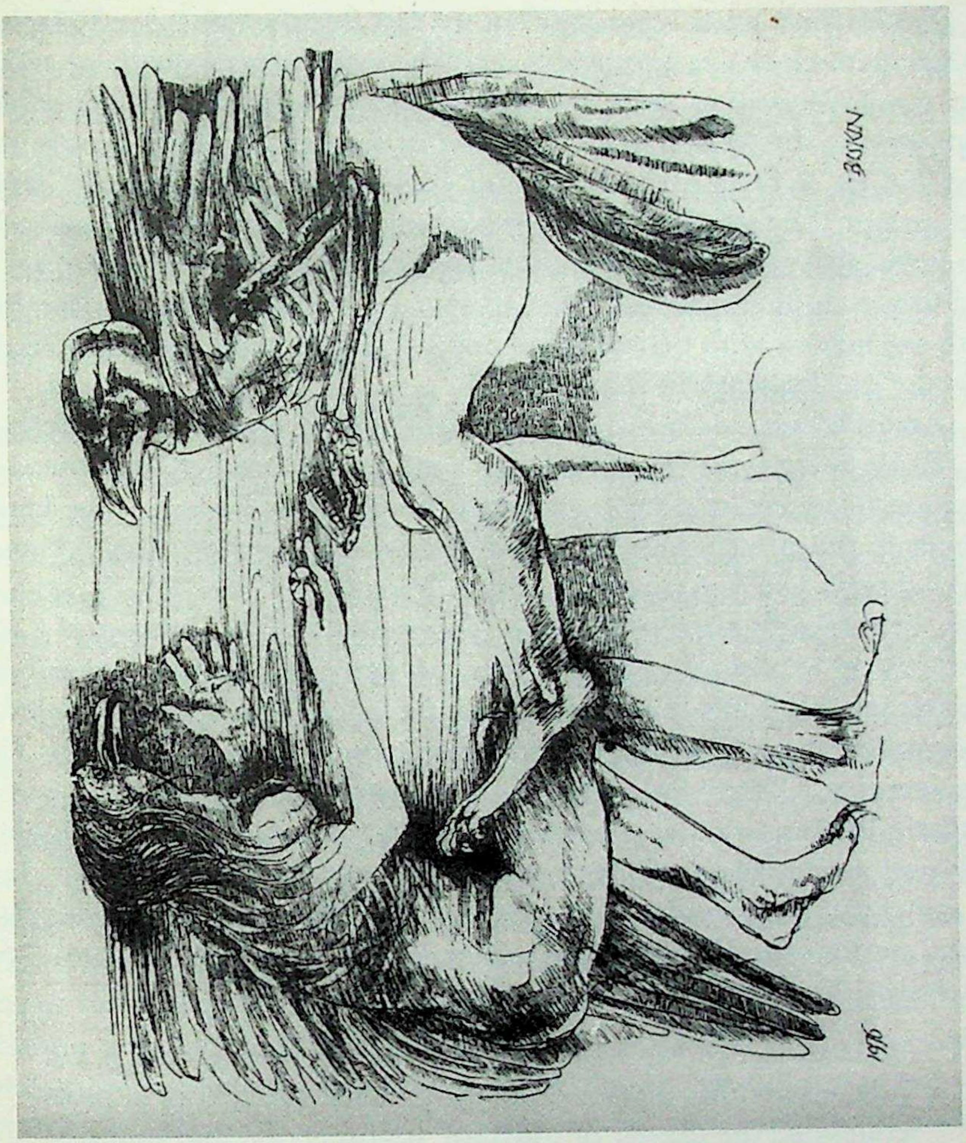


Figure 17. Drawing facing "Bride and groom lie hidden for three days."

After 55 pages of poems and pictures, it is impossible not to read this climax as also a description of the volume's collaboration, of the mutual bringing to perfection of poet and artist, word and image constituting each other in a book whose binding proves their inextricability. Like other collaborators (Frank O'Hara and Larry Rivers in *Stones,* for example), Hughes and Baskin work self-reflexively. The reassembled body parts ("spine," "plates"), the stitching "with steely purple silk," and the inlaying with "scrolls" play off the art of bookmaking.

But Baskin's image makes evident the fact that the task he and Hughes set for themselves was formidable, and there are arguments to be made that the collaboration does not wholly succeed. Elsewhere powerfully responsive to the written word,[18] Baskin, in round C, produced some images that are, as Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts justly observe of "Bride and groom," "inferior" (200). (See also "His legs ran about.") Ironically, the poem that celebrates the mutual creation of man and woman, word and image, inspired the least satisfying image in the volume. Fascination with the hybrid, with the results of unions of difference, can easily shade into the grotesque, as they do here.

And what are we to make of the extent of the mechanical metaphor of "Bride and groom," so at odds, as critics have protested, with the celebration of a reunion with earthy physicality? While the art of the book echoes in the description, bride and groom emerge from their mutual making more like fine machines with "delicate cogs" and "newly wound coils, all shiningly oiled" (56). Such questions about the success of *Cave Birds* belong to a larger critique of the gap between Hughes's primitivist message and his ability to realize it himself. Graham Bradshaw's thoughtful reservations about Hughes's mythologizing are worth recalling here. He observes that it "can seem primitivistic in worrying ways, when the saving 'primitive' message depends, for its creative advancement, on a highly elaborate and 'intellectual' ideology of romantic retrospection" (237), but he concludes that Hughes was aware of the difficulties and writes that awareness into the self-reflexive closing poem of *Cave Birds,* "Finale" ("At the end of the ritual / up comes a goblin"). The poem

> reminds us that the problem confronts the poet as well as his protagonist; this suggests how Hughes has avoided or at least contained the danger of romantic retrospection and sophisticated primitivism, by recognising it within his "alchemical cave drama." (Bradshaw 237)

We might understand the cogs and coils in similar terms as another recognition within the narrative of the difficulties of recovering the body, specifically that it is hard to escape the methods and products of mechanical rationalism.

The volume's gender dynamics, however, resist such containment within the narrative. Even a sympathetic feminist reader like Nathalie Anderson finds the terms of the mystic marriage unsatisfying. "Perfection," she notes of "Bride and groom," may "feel diminishing to a female reader": "'she' characteristically *finds* the parts of his body . . . while 'he' characteristically *devises* her parts" (106–07). Rarely in this volume does the main female character exist on her own: always she is understood as his victim and the necessary component of his redemption. Apart from her desire to end the victimization, her need (does she, too, require reunion?) is never an issue. In addition, there is no sense within the narrative that the erotic frisson that the predatory females provide their author (and maybe their reader/viewers) might be a problem.

Although *Cave Birds* offers evidence that collaboration is not the panacea it is sometimes imagined to be, Hughes's repeated collaborations have the effect, in one aspect of his life, of bringing his mythologizing into the realm of practical activity, of giving it a small but real commitment to the collaboration itself and to the other artist, and of producing a tangible consequence in the collaborative book. Collaboration grounds Hughes's great theme—the integration of damaged, rational man with the other, the recovery of empathy—in a social commitment.

Now is a good time, as Hughes's life and achievements are being reconsidered following his death, to give his collaborative works the thoughtful readings they deserve and to undertake comparative studies placing them in the context of other modern experiments with words, images, and the body of the book. How would Hughes's collaborations appear compared with Creeley's or O'Hara's? Such defamiliarizing would, I think, prove suggestive in understanding and assessing Hughes's achievements by reshaping the field in which we see them. It would also help expand the current, growing effort to write the history of collaboration in twentieth-century poetry not only by adding Hughes to the account but also by demonstrating the extension of collaborative practice beyond avant-garde circles.

Notes

1. See for example Bornstein, Rainey, Dettmar and Watt, and McGann. For studies of literary collaboration in addition to Stillinger, see for example Koestenbaum, Rabaté, and Laird.

2. I use the term *fine press* or *fine printing* in the broad sense Johanna Drucker describes: "The term 'fine printing' is generally associated with letterpress, handset type, and limited editions, but also can be used to describe carefully

produced work in any print medium" (380). Most fine presses are small, but the reverse is not necessarily the case.

3. Most of these books were published only in limited editions. Some, like *Positives* and *God's Trombones,* are published only in trade editions. For an account of the rarely discussed collaboration on *God's Trombones,* see Carroll.

4. Among these volumes are *Poems* by Ted Hughes, Ruth Fainlight, and Alan Sillitoe (1971); *Eat Crow,* drawing by Leonard Baskin (1971); *Prometheus on His Crag,* drawing by Leonard Baskin (1973); *Season Songs* (1974); *Earth-Moon,* illustrated by Hughes (1976); *Orts*, drawing by Leonard Baskin (1978); *Moortown Elegies,* drawing by Leonard Baskin (1978); *Adam and the Sacred Nine,* drawing by Leonard Baskin (1979); and *Remains of Elmet,* photographs by Fay Godwin (1979).

5. Hughes hoped Rainbow could publish Plath's poems "quietly without drawing the attention of a readership he now thought to be hostile" (Feinstein 183). *Crossing the Water* and *Winter Trees* (both 1971) turned out to be financial successes, prompting further charges that Hughes was exploiting Plath.

6. Sagar and Tabor note that

> the name of the Press is related to an original plan (unfortunately foiled by vagaries in the availability of materials) to have each publication bound in a different shade of leather, so that the books would form a 'spectrum' across the bookshelf. (4)

7. Graphicality is discussed by Morris Eaves.

8. Scigaj, *Poetry* 144. Sagar suggests the invitation came in 1966 (*Laughter* xxii), and Feinstein suggests it came in 1967 (160), but Lisa Baskin confirms that 1963 is accurate.

9. The collaborations range from the coupling of their works, as in the numerous books by Hughes that contain a drawing by Baskin, to the more extensive give and take that is usually implied by the term *collaboration*. In addition to *Cave Birds, Capriccio,* and *Howls and Whispers,* these latter include the limited edition of *Crow* with 12 drawings by Baskin (London: Faber, 1973), *Season Songs* (New York: Viking, 1975), *Moon-Whales and Other Moon Poems* (New York: Viking, 1976), *A Primer of Birds* (Devon: Gehenna, 1981), *Makomaki* (Leeds: Eremite, 1985); and *Flowers and Insects* (London: Faber, 1986).

10. Two studies that do read them as part of the work are Elizabeth Maslen's "Counterpoint" and, itself a collaboration, Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts's *Ted Hughes.* As Maslen pointed out more than 15 years ago, the "focus on

Hughes' own achievements has tended to obscure the fact that collaborations with visual artists have been an integral part of his work for well over twenty years" (33). For example, Alexander Davis's interesting essay on visionary imagination in Hughes never mentions Leonard Baskin or his images in a long discussion of *Cave Birds.*

11. See Sagar, *The Art of Ted Hughes* 243–44, for an overview of the collaboration. Sagar counts only eight illustrations to the 12 Hughes poems in round C, but there seem to be 10.

12. For a summary and analysis of the volume's alchemical background and quest, see Timothy Materer 141–55. He does not discuss the pictures or the collaboration. Nick Bishop, in exploring the possibility of psychological criticism based not on Jung or Freud but on Sufism and Gurdjieff, notes the relation of the "principle of alchemy" to the "'layered' compositional process" of *Cave Birds* (178).

13. The Ilkley Literature Festival is especially interesting in terms of the volume's composition. Baskin and Hughes had originally planned an edition of the poems to be published by Baskin's Gehenna Press, but then the Ilkley Literature Festival invited Hughes (for a commission, not an insignificant motive in modern collaborative production) to stage a presentation of the poems. According to Scigaj, Hughes reworked the poems of round B with the performative nature of the occasion in mind (*Poetry of Ted Hughes* 207). The verbal-visual relation of this version of *Cave Birds* (dramatic reading with projected images) was conceived within the conventions of the theater's composite art.

In addition to the limited edition of *Cave Birds,* the Scolar Press also published a broadside (a single folded sheet) of "The Interrogator" with Baskin's drawing and a facsimile of a draft of the poem (Sagar and Tabor 65).

14. In *New Selected Poems* (1982), selections from *Cave Birds* appear without accompanying images but with a foreword by Hughes outlining the collaboration with Baskin, briefly describing the missing images, and asserting their importance: "throughout the original sequence the interdependence between drawings and verses is quite close." In subsequent versions, reference to the images gradually shrinks, until in *New Selected Poems 1957–1994* there are not only no images but no contextualizing notes of any kind.

15. The 10 poems are, followed by their titles in the trade edition where different: "The Knight," "The Baptist," "The Hall of Judgment" ("A flayed crow in the hall of judgment"), "The Gatekeeper," "A Loyal Mother" ("A green mother"), "Incomparable Marriage" ("A riddle"), "The Culprit" ("The scapegoat"), "The Guide," "Walking Bare," and "The Good Angel" ("The owl flower").

16. See McGann for a reading of the final lines of "The Circus Animals' Desertion" as an allusion to the commerce of the paper industry. Rag and bone shops, he explains, sold rags

> either to stationers or to the great paper merchants, who would reprocess them to make paper. . . . The immediate historical allusion is not to papermaking in general, but to printers and publishers who used a certain kind of paper (rag paper) and made a certain kind of book (fine-press printing). (5)

17. The round A poems are: "The summoner," "The interrogator," "The judge," "The plaintiff," "The executioner," "The accused," "The risen," and "Finale." The round C poems are "The scream," "After the first fright," "She seemed so considerate," "In these fading moments I wanted to say," "First, the doubtful charts of skin," "Something was happening," "Only a little sleep, a little slumber," "As I came, I saw a wood," "After there was nothing there was a woman," "His legs ran about," and "Bride and groom lie hidden for three days."

18. Not only in other collaborations with Hughes but also in his numerous illustrations to other writers including Shakespeare, Euripides, Poe, Blake, Tennyson, and James Baldwin. See Baskin and Franklin.

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Textual Confessions: Narcissism in Anne Sexton's Early Poetry

Jo Gill

Confessional poetry, a mode that was prominent in the United States in the 1960s and early 70s, has, over time, come to be regarded as a regrettable, aberrant, and momentary spasm in the development of that nation's literature. It is habitually, if a little inaccurately, consigned to a specific and distant time and place: Robert Phillips, the author of the first and indeed only full-length account of the mode, situates it in "Post-Christian, post-Kennedy, post-Pill America" (xiii). Its chief impact is now understood as providing a foil against which to measure the sophistication and achievements of postconfessional writing—Language poetry, the New York school, and various other avant-garde and postmodern forms. As Alan Williamson suggests, "confessional poetry—almost from the moment that unfortunate term was coined—has been the whipping boy of half a dozen newer schools, New Surrealism, New Formalism, Language poetry" ("Stories" 51).

Marjorie Perloff defines the exciting "radical poetries" that dominate contemporary American poetry by distinguishing them from an earlier tradition of personal lyricism:

> The more radical poetries of the past few decades, whatever their particular differences, have come to reconceive the "opening of the field," not as an entrance into *authenticity* but, on the contrary, as a turn toward *artifice,* toward poetry as making or praxis rather than poetry as impassioned speech, as self-expression. ("Changing Face" 93)

Similarly, Michael Davidson characterizes the interests of current Language poetry by reference to its difference from the "expressive" poetry that preceded it:

> Language writing bases its analysis of authority not on the author's particular politics but in the verbal means by which any statement claims its status as truth. Moreover, by foregrounding the abstract features of the speech act rather than the authenticity of the expressive moment, the poet acknowledges the contingency of utterances in social interchange. (74)

Both Perloff and Davidson define postmodern poetry by reference to its other—confessional or self-expressive poetry. Yet paradoxically, as the argument below demonstrates, what fundamentally characterizes this other and thus gives definition to "radical poetries" is the same deeply embedded interest in "artifice," in "poetry as making or praxis," and in the "verbal means by which any statement claims its status as truth" as is thought to characterize postconfessional writing alone. "Authenticity," "artifice," "praxis," and "truth" are the crucial and contested terms here.

The implication that contemporary avant-garde poetry is "radical" while the confessional poetry that preceded it is reactionary and conservative itself merits scrutiny. In its own time confessional poetry was perceived to be a profoundly radical movement. It represented a startling departure from—and offered powerful and potentially fatal resistance to—the conventions of the high academic poetry that it succeeded, a literature that Irving Howe describes as "responsible and moderate. And tame" (qtd. in Gray 216). For A. Alvarez, one of the form's earliest champions and commentators, confessional or "extremist" (229) poetry had apocalyptic potential. Its function—indeed its responsibility—was to break the mould of what he termed "the accepted Academic-Modern style."

It is apparent from any survey of the criticism of confessional poetry that the mode is habitually and negatively associated with an authorial self-absorption verging on narcissism. Elizabeth Bruss, for example, refers to the "narcissistic indulgence of the confessional tradition" (18). Edward Lucie-Smith, writing in 1964 in *Critical Quarterly,* argues that in contemporary "personal" poetry "introversion seems to have triumphed over experiment. The poet gazes with obsessive narcissism at his own reflection in the mirror of art" (357). Alvarez, in his highly influential *Times Literary Supplement* essay "Beyond All This Fiddle," distinguishes Robert Lowell's

Life Studies from the work of "vulgar" confessional poets, concluding in Lowell's defense that *Life Studies* "is left with something more sustaining than mere narcissism" (230). He also quotes, approvingly, Sylvia Plath's comment: "I think that personal experience shouldn't be a kind of shut box and a mirror-looking narcissistic experience. I believe it should be generally relevant to such things as Hiroshima and Dachau, and so on" (231).

Of the confessional poets of post-Second World War America, it has been said that none was "more consistently and uniformly confessional than Anne Sexton [. . .] her name has almost become identified with the genre" (Lerner 52). And it is Sexton, more than any of her peers, who has been pronounced guilty of narcissism. As Joyce Carol Oates explains: "Sexton has been criticized for the intensity of her preoccupations: always the self, the victimized, bullying, narcissistic self." Patricia Meyer Spacks condemns her "shrill narcissism" and "insistent mirroring" (188). Alan Williamson complains of the "later Sexton" that she has become "the uneasy narcissist, self-indulgent and sarcastic at once" ("Confession and Tragedy" 178), and Helen Vendler pointedly gives thanks for a rare volume in which the poet "turn[s] away from the morass of narcissism" (441). As Alicia Ostriker concludes, "Anne Sexton is the easiest poet in the world to condescend to. Critics get in line for the pleasure of filing her under N for Narcissist" ("That Story" 263).

It is the contention of this essay that narcissism, rather than exemplifying the difference between confessional and postconfessional forms of poetry, represents its potential convergence. By exploring the mythical and psychoanalytic roots of narcissism and examining recent readings of the term's place in contemporary literature and culture, it is possible to recuperate the adjective *narcissistic* and demonstrate its importance in apparently divergent poetic traditions. Narcissism is to be understood not as a limiting and inadvertent error peculiar to confessional poetry (and acute in the work of Anne Sexton) but as a sophisticated and productive strategy employed by confessional and avant-garde poetries alike in their negotiation of such shared preoccupations as language, subjectivity, representation, and referentiality.

What appears to be authorial self-absorption in Sexton's work may, then, be read and defended as a sophisticated *textual* narcissism of the kind delineated by Linda Hutcheon in *Narcissistic Narrative* and more typically identified with the "radical poetries" mentioned above. In Hutcheon's analysis, it is "the narrative text, and not the author, that is being described as narcissistic" (1). She concentrates on a writing that is textually rather than biographically "self-reflective, self-informing, self-reflexive, auto-referential, auto-representational" and that, above all, contemplates and interrogates its own "narrative and/or linguistic identity." Sexton's confessional poetry demands to be read in these terms. It foreshadows, in more fundamental ways than has been recognized, the markedly self-reflexive tendencies of more recent American poetry. This is not to assert that it represents a proto-postmodern rejection of authenticity, referentiality, or expression but rather to suggest that it is skeptical, knowing, and inquisitive about the status of these and about the processes by which they are established and understood.

Since Hutcheon's *Narcissistic Narrative* mainly concerns fiction, many of her examples and conclusions derive from a comparison of contemporary or postmodern novels with those of the dominant (that is, realist) tradition. Indeed, Hutcheon makes a point of distinguishing between poetry and fiction, arguing that, in this context, poetry is in advance of the novel: "Of all the literary genres, the novel is the one which has perhaps most resisted being 'rescued' from the myth of the instrumentality of language. Poetry escaped with the aid of the Symbolists, the New Critics, and others" (87). Further, she suggests that "whereas poetic language is now more or less accepted as autonomous and intransitive, fiction and narrative still suggest a transitive and referential use of words" (88). In both respects I would disagree with Hutcheon. Confession, unlike much other modern poetry, has not been entirely liberated from this "myth of the instrumentality of language." The language of the confessional text continues often to be read as "transitive and referential," as a truthful representation of the lived experience of the author. Confessional poetry, unlike other postmodern poetry, persists in being read as an expressive/realist mode, offering privileged and reliable insight into personal experience.

Yet Sexton's form of confession, like "narcissistic narrative," resists such readings. Her apparent self-absorption masks a knowing and theoretically astute textual engagement with the problematic processes of writing and representation. Her poetry is keenly aware—and indeed flaunts its awareness—that its truths are arbitrary and its authority disputable. Crucially, it is aware that its putative originality is displaced by a discursive and productive relationship between text and reader. Just as narcissistic narrative thematizes or mirrors its own processes of reception (Hutcheon, *Narcissistic* xvi), so too the confessional text takes as one of its subjects the complicity of its own audience in the generation of its meaning—in the "completion" of its truth (Foucault 66).

In *The Mirror and the Lamp,* M. H. Abrams distinguishes between expressive and mimetic theories of art. While conventionally, confessional poetry belongs to the expressive realm (it is the "internal made external" [22]), it is also, as I have suggested, possible and persuasive to read it as mimetic, as textually narcissistic, as mirroring its own aesthetic processes. Indeed, the image of the simultaneously luminous and reflective glass bowl that dominates Sexton's poem "For John Who Begs Me Not to Enquire Further" (hereafter "For John") is important in encapsulating both of these possibilities—a point to which I will return. With this in mind, one might argue that Sexton's writing looks both inside and outside simultaneously and to that extent is always doubled, split, or fragmented in its perspective.

The early poems discussed here—"An Obsessive Combination of Ontological Inscape, Trickery and Love" (hereafter "An Obsessive Combination") and "The Double Image," both written in 1958, and "For John," written in 1959, are narcissistic in the sense that they are intrigued by and reflect on how, exactly, their meanings are realized and shared.[1] They seek to reach and convey a better understanding not of the experience ostensibly at the source of each but of the way in which they themselves work as confession. Mirrors and other reflective surfaces (windows, glass bowls, portraits) are fundamental to this enquiry, either covertly—as in the case of "An Obsessive Combination," where mirroring processes are "structuralized, internalized" (Hutcheon, *Narcissistic* 7)—or overtly—as in "For John," where they are "explicitly thematized." The textual narcissism that we see here forms the foundation of Sexton's exploration of the dynamics of confession in later poems such as those in the "Letters to Dr. Y" sequence (1960–70), with their sophisticated analyses of their own linguistic processes, and in "Talking to Sheep" (1974), which displays an acute consciousness and condemnation of its own audience. Throughout, narcissism is presented as both strategy (reflection as process) and object (the reflection as material subject of enquiry) and, while generous in proliferating meanings, is also always shown to be susceptible to error, to be potentially distorting and distorted.

The cultural origins of the concept of narcissism are to be found in the story of Echo and Narcissus from Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* Narcissus is a beautiful and proud youth, the object of many observers' unrequited desires—including those of the nymph Echo, who "cannot stay silent when another person speaks, but yet has not learned to speak first herself" (83). Narcissus spurns Echo's advances and in despair she retreats to the woods and caves, wasting away until only her voice remains. As punishment for his pride Narcissus is condemned to experience the same frustrated desire, and falls in love with his own reflected image in a pool. He is admonished: "the thing you are seeing does not exist: only turn aside and you will lose what you love" (85). Realizing that, like Echo, he will never possess the object of his love, he too wastes away and dies, leaving in place of his body a circle of flowers.

The myth of Narcissus is important to Sexton's poetics in several respects. It offers a framework within which to develop themes of self-love and desire, it offers fruitful metaphors such as those of the mirror and the cave, and it lends the structural and linguistic potential of the echo. As James Goodwin has argued, in the context of the origins of autobiography,

> the figure of Narcissus represents complexes—or, in other words, structures of great intellectual and affective force—that are indicative of the functions and consequences of self-knowledge at different stages in our cultural history. (69)

The story of Narcissus is also of profound significance in Sigmund Freud's account of human psychology and is instrumental to his recognition and definition of the superego. In "On Narcissism" Freud identifies a universal "primary and normal narcissism" (66)—an early and necessary stage of self-love that must be transcended, the other replacing the ego as love object, if the subject is to assume his or her proper place in relation to parents, to subsequent sex objects, and to the wider world.

In the context of Sexton's exploration and defense of narcissism, Freud's argument is influential because he asserts—in contradiction to the opinions of his predecessors and peers—that narcissism is common and "normal," that there is contiguity between "healthy and neurotic subjects" (73). The belief that narcissism is a universal and shared condition dominates Sexton's poem "For John." It specifically informs the I/you dialogue that is sustained throughout and insists on the reciprocity of the subject's and implied reader's experience. Freud's analysis is valuable too because it describes in psychoanalytic terms the tendency to turn inward, "away from the external world" (66) that, although apparently characteristic of confessionalism, is at issue in Sexton's poetry. It also traces the necessary route outward by which "our mental life [. . .] pass[es] beyond the limits of narcissism" and forms an attachment to objects (78). In addition, "On Narcissism" foregrounds the importance in psychological terms of observing and "being observed" (91). It recognizes—and this is crucial to an understanding of confessional writing and its reception—the compelling attraction of someone else's narcissism: "it seems very evident that another person's narcissism has a great attraction for those who have renounced part of their own narcissism and are in search of object-love" (82–83).

In Freud, then, we find what might be described as the first of several psychoanalytic defenses of narcissism—a defense that Jacques Lacan was later to take up.[2] For Lacan, narcissism—the gaze in the mirror—initiates the infant child's realization and confirmation of his or her identity. The mirror is vital to the two finally inextricable processes of finding and naming (or textualizing) the self. In Lacanian terms, it is by means of the mirror stage ("le stade du miroir" [2]) that the aspiring subject leaves the realm of the imaginary and gains access to the symbolic order of language—a journey that is invoked in Sexton's poem "The Double Image," discussed later.

Richard Sennett and Christopher Lasch, writing about contemporary American culture in the 1970s—the period that had, contentiously, been labeled the "me decade" (Lasch 238)—study the growth and dominance of narcissistic "personality traits" in the "prevailing social conditions" (239). Sennett identifies a problem with the erosion of boundaries between public and private life, between external and internal worlds—a concern that is also voiced in Sexton's writing. He argues that "cultural forces [. . .] have produced this narcissistic self-absorption" (333) and insists that it is the "social environment" (12) that is at fault and must be changed. Lasch discusses narcissism—the extreme consequence and end of modern society's "logic of individualism" (xv)—in the context of changes in American domestic, cultural, and political life. Narcissism, he suggests, represents a reaction to and retreat from a general loss of faith in contemporary society, in the lessons of the past, and in the promise of the future (xvi–xvii). For Lasch, it is a limiting, impoverished (xviii) stance, one that exemplifies the individual's inability to "make connection with the world" (240).

For Sexton, however, as in Freud and Lacan, narcissism is broader, more complex, and finally more productive. Paradoxically, the self-disclosure in her work is made always with a view to its reader; while ostensibly focusing inward, it also looks outward and turns away from the self. Crucially, Sexton's poetry is predicated on restoring the "connection with the world" that Lasch sees as absent in narcissism (whereas Freud, as Jeffrey Berman explains, sees narcissism as precisely engendering a "relationship between the self and the object world" [10]) and on flamboyantly laying bare the processes by which this connection is established. This communicative impulse has tended to be lost in many readings of what narcissism signifies.

In Sexton's "An Obsessive Combination," "The Double Image," and "For John," the I can only be comprehended, the self only known, by placing itself in conjunction with an other. The I alone is not self-sufficient and cannot be expressed without a you. Thus all three poems are predicated on a persistent and sustaining dialogue. In this context, a narcissistic perspective denotes not a solipsistic devotion to the self but recognition that the self can only be perceived as part of a larger social context, as one among many. Narcissism here is an outward-looking gesture or process representing not stasis (Lasch's "diminishing expectations" [8]) but change, not silence (Plath's "shut box") but dialogue and communication—it engages the Echo at the heart of Ovid's tale.[3]

The seeds of this interest in the fertile and discursive possibilities of narcissism—understood as a purposive textual strategy rather than as a symptom of debilitating self-absorption—are apparent in one of Sexton's earliest and uncollected poems. "An Obsessive Combination of Ontological Inscape, Trickery and Love" was drafted in 1958 and first published in *Voices: A Journal of Poetry* in 1959. The poem is striking for the way in which it anticipates, and makes explicit, concerns that are developed subsequently in her writing. For example, we see here the roots of a sustained interest in the function and fallibility of language, expressed later in poems such as "Is It True?" and "Hurry Up Please It's Time" (1972?) and throughout the posthumous volume *The Awful Rowing Toward God* (1975). "An Obsessive Combination," although described by Diane Wood Middlebrook as "an awkward little exercise" (124), is paradigmatic of Sexton's poetics in its determined and self-conscious exploration of its own linguistic and representational status.

"An Obsessive Combination" is narcissistic in the sense that in it "process [is] made visible" (Hutcheon, *Narcissistic* 6). It exemplifies what

Hutcheon defines as a characteristically postmodern interest in *"how* art is created, not just in *what* is created" (8). Arguably, of course, such self-consciousness has a long literary history. For Hutcheon, however (and Sexton's writing, I would contend, sustains this reading), "the more modern textual self-preoccupation differs mostly in its explicitness, its intensity, and its own critical self-awareness," and this is a consequence of a post-Saussurian "change in the concept of language" (18).

To look first at the title of the poem, the adjective "obsessive" seems to lay itself open to typical accusations of confessional compulsion and self-absorption. However, it transpires that the obsession is not with the self but with writing, with the linguistic strategies by which meaning is generated and shared. "Ontological" shifts attention away from direct, lived, "raw" (to use Robert Lowell's term [qtd. in Hamilton 277]) experience to a more abstract, impersonal consideration of the condition of being. "Combination," too, has considerable resonance in the context of Sexton's poetics, signifying the combination or meeting of minds, the discursive relationship between speaker and reader required for the confession successfully to be created and disseminated.

Gerard Manley Hopkins's notion of "inscape" is the lodestone of the poem and plays a key role in disclosing Sexton's larger poetics. It is explained by *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* as

> Inward significant character or quality belonging uniquely to objects or events in nature and human experience esp. as perceived by the blended observation and introspection of the poet and in turn embodied in patterns of such specific poetic elements as imagery, rhythm, rhyme, assonance, sound symbolism, and allusion.

Clearly, "inscape" suggests the complex and seemingly contradictory process, subsequently explored in "For John," by which looking out and in ("blend[ing] observation and introspection") become synonymous. It connotes the way in which meaning is realized—in the dual and seemingly contradictory sense of being made apparent ("embodied in patterns") and being received. Hopkins writes:

> *oftening, over-and-overing, aftering* of the inscape must take place in order to detach it to the mind and in this light poetry is speech which afters and oftens its inscape, speech couched in a repeating figure. (qtd. in Gardner xxiin2; Hopkins's emphasis)[4]

The inner essence is projected outward by the same kinds of linguistic and syntactical patterning, repetition, and palindromic construction as we see in Sexton's poem.

In one of the Crawshaw Lectures that Sexton delivered at Colgate University in 1972 she describes this projection: "one writes of oneself [. . .] in order to invite *in*" and "to find the way, *out* through experience" (Lecture 9, p. 1; my emphases). Thus "An Obsessive Combination," like many later poems, takes as its subject the liminal space between I and you, speaker and reader, exposing and exploring the boundaries between self and object world. It traces the process by which the self and its metonyms (here imagination and ideas) manifest themselves in and connect with the exterior—and this is primarily, indeed unavoidably, through language.

"An Obsessive Combination" achieves its effects by the "generative [word] play" and "linguistic self-consciousness" identified by Hutcheon as characteristic of narcissistic narrative (*Narcissistic* 120, 118). Moreover, in its "performative" (Perloff, *Dance* 176) and "playful" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 34) aspects, the poem may be said to display some of the defining features of postmodernist writing. Hutcheon sees as typical of such texts linguistic features such as acrostics, anagrams, cryptograms, and puns (*Narcissistic* 119) that serve to "call the reader's attention to the fact that the text is made up of words, words which are delightfully fertile in creative suggestiveness" (101). The title of the poem is a near acrostic, containing the word *coital* (perhaps suggestive of self and other joining together).[5] The text itself features numerous puns, homonyms, and anagrams ("tiers," "tries," "rites," "right," "routes" [4]). It also incorporates the palindrome "RATS / . . . STAR," a supreme example of narcissistic wordplay, one that appears repeatedly in later poems: "With Mercy for the Greedy" (1960) concludes with a despairing and self-reflexive definition of poetry as "the tongue's wrangle, / the world's pottage, the rat's star" (63), and "Hurry Up Please It's Time" features a sustained dialogue between the paired voices of "God" and "Ms. Dog" (384–95).

The opening lines of "An Obsessive Combination"—"Busy, with an idea for a code, I write / signals hurrying from left to right" (4)—confirm the self-reflexivity of the title. "Busy" suggests not only that the speaker is preoccupied ("obsessive"?) but also that this is important work (business). The fascination here is not with personal experience, but with thoughts, ideas, semantic and epistemological sequences—with an "idea for a code" in the first line and with "reasons" in line 4.

That the poem is "a code" and that writing "signals" confirm its interest in the hermeneutic process by which words emerge and are deciphered. The metaphor of the "code" indicates that the confessional text might obscure (as we will see in a moment, I use the verb advisedly) rather than, as is commonly thought, lay bare its secrets. The line break after "write" suggests, and the rest of the poem confirms, that the "signals" are autonomous; the poet writes, yet in what seems to be a distinct movement, it is the "signals" that hurry across the page. Language in this poem, as elsewhere in Sexton, pre-exists and dominates the subject, constructs rather than reflects experience. As Hutcheon argues: "in literature, words create worlds; they are not necessarily counters, however adequate, to any extraliterary reality. In that very fact lies their aesthetic validity and their ontological status" (*Narcissistic* 102–03).

"An Obsessive Combination" examines this complex and—as it transpires—amazing process:

> [. . .] I write
> signals hurrying from left to right,
> or right to left, by obscure routes,
> for my own reasons; taking a word like "writes"
> down tiers of tries until its secret rites
> make sense.

The image of the physical and orderly progression of language across the page ("left to right") offers a metaphor for the way the act of confession is, typically, thought to put things "right" in the therapeutic sense. However, as this poem demonstrates, it is not the simple act of release or the tapping of the wellspring of inner compulsion that makes things right but rather the textualization, the act of writing. Moreover, as the addendum in the next line ("or right to left") indicates, the act of confession may compound rather than resolve problems. It may not offer the "expressive-purgative release" that Alicia Ostriker (*Stealing* 126), for example, expects of the mode but may instead complicate, confuse, and ultimately make sinister.

The recourse to the "obscure routes" suggests that understanding may emerge from the dark (from the private, the unseemly, the sinister), which is thereby recuperated as a viable source for poetry. In this respect, the poem anticipates "For John," where the inauspicious "narrow diary of my mind" (34) produces and refracts something of dazzling and broad significance ("something outside of myself"). It also paves the way for a number of later poems, including "With Mercy for the Greedy" and "Hurry Up Please It's Time," in which equally abject or occluded experience is "amazingly"—to speaker and reader alike—transformed into radiant meaning.

In "An Obsessive Combination" language, perception, and meaning are constantly in flux, multiplying ceaselessly:

> [. . .] taking a word like "writes"
> down tiers of tries until its secret rites
> make sense; or until, suddenly, RATS
> can amazingly and funnily become STAR
> and right to left that small star
> is mine, for my own liking, to stare
> its five lucky pins inside out [. . .]

Authorial responsibility is denied, hence the passivity of voice and the astonishment at these linguistic and ontological transformations. Certainly Sexton does not go as far as later Language poets in rupturing the bond between signifier and signified: "RATS" and "STAR," while locked in a palindromic relationship, do also connote distinct and opposing referents that are metaphorically suggestive within the context of the poem. However, she places this bond under critical scrutiny (the transposition of a letter or phoneme can drastically alter the signification of a word). Nothing, Sexton insists, can be made into something, and this by a seemingly random succession of semantic shifts.

The enthusiastic explanatory rhetoric of the second half of the poem, with its bright adverbs ("suddenly," "amazingly," and "funnily") and its gleeful aside ("for my own liking"), gives way, in the final clause, to a more skeptical and resigned tone:

> and right to left that small star
> is mine, for my own liking, to stare
> its five lucky pins inside out, to store
> forever kindly, as if it were a star
> I touched and a miracle I really wrote.

The tentative "as if" concedes that words—and the confessional text—may not deliver what is expected of them, that language may fail. The sudden shift at the end from the present tense to the conditional and qualified suggests that the epiphany that the poem seems to promise is a transient thing. "An Obsessive Combination" warns that "RATS" may become "STAR" not by a miracle but by semantic "trickery." Thus we are returned to the textuality of the confessional poem, to its status as "autonomous and intransitive object" (Hutcheon, *Narcissistic* 88). "An Obsessive Combination," one of Sexton's earliest poems, is paradigmatic of much of her later writing in that it is unable or unwilling to proffer closure. It refuses the temptations of an easy and satisfying conclusion, finishing instead on an open-ended and conditional note ("as if it were"). In Hutcheon's terms—like many postmodern texts—it "admits its own provisionality" (*Poetics* 13).

Similar concerns inform "The Double Image," a complex and profoundly artful poem that contemplates the relationships between three generations of women: the speaker, her dying mother, and her infant daughter. The defining motifs are the fluctuating mental and physical sickness of the speaker and her mother, the patterns of absence and presence that define the relationships, and the dual portraits (or double images) that the mother commissions of herself and the speaker and hangs "on opposite walls" (40). "The Double Image" may be read in terms of Lacan's understanding of narcissism—as an examination of the way in which we achieve subjectivity by perceiving and identifying ourselves in relation to others. For Lacan, as we have seen, the mirror (or the "mirror stage" [2]) is fundamental to this process. What is interesting in "The Double Image," though, is that beneath the "transitive and referential" (Hutcheon, *Narcissistic* 88) surface of the poem—the narrative of loss and recovery that ostensibly inspires, shapes, and validates it—lies a compelling, effective examination of its own processes of production and reception.

"The Double Image" is not, then, only or primarily about the relationships and experiences it describes. It is about its own status as confession. It is a metapoem that flaunts its own mirroring processes (Hutcheon, *Narcissistic* 20) in order to draw attention to its constructed, contingent, and finally illusory nature. The poem's title gestures toward this doubleness and signals its larger achievement: its self-reflexive—and arguably postmodern—undermining of the mimetic strategies apparently at its thematic and structural core. For what the poem describes and finally exemplifies is a succession of doublings or reflections mimicking only each other (the dual portraits of the speaker and mother, the image of the speaker looking at her own painted image and drafting her own textual portrait). Speaker and reader alike are locked in the endless *mise en abyme* characteristic of postmodernism and typical of narcissistic narrative, a proliferation of images in infinite regress offering no necessary access to extratextual reality.

"The Double Image" is intensely catoptric. The arrangement of the poem's seven sections represents a near-perfect symmetry of action. In the first three sections we see the daughter and then the speaker leaving home, followed by the central (fourth) section, which denotes a liminal moment of uncertainty. The closing three sections complete the symmetry, first the speaker and then the daughter returning to the family home.

The multiple repetitions within the poem ("Too late, / too late" in section 2 [36], "as if," "as if," "as if" in section 3 [38]) echo, mimicking the proliferation of reflections that the poem describes. The emphatic if irregular end rhymes work in a similar way and reflect the claustrophobia of the situation with all three participants seemingly trapped in a hall of mirrors. There is a constant swaying, forward and backward movement within the poem—not only of action (the symmetrical pattern of departure and return mentioned above) but of attention—such that the reader, like the speaker, is forced to look from one mirrored image to another and then back again. In this way the text brings "to readers' attention their central and enabling role" in the production of meaning (Hutcheon, *Narcissistic* xii).

The poem emphasizes the symmetry of the double images and their implicit polarity. The paintings resemble each other—both women's smiles are described as being held "in place" (37, 40)—but they also invert each other: the speaker's portrait is illuminated by the "north light" (40) while the mother's is lit from the "south." (As Lacan points out, such inversion is characteristic of the mirror stage [2]). Sexton's speaker addresses both the mirror image of the mother and the reflection of the self, thus confirming the identity and inversion that unite them: "my mocking mirror, my overthrown / love, my first image" (40). That the mirror is "mocking" indicates that it offers an idealized image of what the speaker should be, reinforcing her inadequacy. We are reminded of the plight of the humiliated Echo in Ovid's tale and of Narcissus too, who perceives a "mocking mirror" and experiences the simultaneous enticement and rejection of his "first image."[6]

The closing stanza further elaborates the double image of the title. The speaker finally acknowledges to her daughter that "I needed you"

(41), naming the bond between the "I" and "you" suggested in the opening lines. It is now the daughter, rather than the mother, who has bestowed (gender) identity on the speaker. The mother's failure is made good by the daughter:

> I, who was never quite sure
> about being a girl, needed another
> life, another image to remind me. (41–42)

The "image" is the daughter, produced by the speaker in order to confirm her own identity, just as the speaker's mother created first the speaker and then an image (portrait) of her in a vain attempt to cling to life. Hence the speaker's final admission: "And this was my worst guilt; you could not cure / nor soothe it. I made you to find me" (42). This is a compelling conclusion. However, the real interest lies in the confession not that the speaker made the daughter (biologically) but that she has constructed the daughter in the poem (textually). These final lines confirm the poem as textually narcissistic in Hutcheon's terms. For the ultimate referent of "double image" is the poem itself—the strategies it employs in its construction and its aestheticization of relationships, experience, subjectivity. The "worst guilt" pertains to the speaker's fabrication and manipulation of the mother/daughter relationship in order to construct this very poem and thereby to create or found (and emphatically not to reflect) her singular identity as poet: "to find me."

Narcissistic narrative, as we have seen, is a writing that is concerned with the role of the reader. Sexton's early poem "For John" is noteworthy for the way in which it exemplifies this concern, addressing in particular the discursive relationship between speaker and reader, penitent and confessor. There is a critical consensus about the importance of the poem as an expression of Sexton's poetics. Middlebrook describes "For John" as a "defense [. . .] of the whole genre of poetry that would soon be labeled 'confessional' " (100). Diana Hume George declares that "the autobiographical *I* becomes a spokesperson for the poetic and personal authenticity of the confessional stance" (101). Caroline King Barnard Hall argues that "For John" should be read as "a credo [. . .] for Sexton's entire oeuvre" (14). I agree that "For John" marks out Sexton's position as a poet and her conception of and aspirations for the confessional mode. However, I would argue that its importance lies not in its defense of what confession reveals but in its exemplification of how it functions.

The images of the cracked mirror and glass bowl in "For John," in addition to evoking Narcissus's pool, signify primary subjective narcissism ("the cracked mirror / or my own selfish death" [34]) and may be read as metaphors for the creative process (I, the poet, look to myself and show you a reflection of what I see) in all its multifaceted complexity. Moreover, in this particular poem, the reflective glass instigates the calling in of the reader and the exchange of responsibility between reader and writer in the act of perceiving and interpreting confessional meaning. The poem is predicated on the paradox that in order truthfully to tell us about telling the truth, the speaker must weave a "complicated lie" (35), which may itself be a lie—a *mise en abyme* of the kind that, as we've seen, characterizes narcissistic narrative. The poem's manipulation of successive shifting mirror images confirms the potential multiplicity and unreliability of self-representation. In place of a coherent subject, faithfully mirrored, we see only fleeting, oblique glimpses of a fragmentary reflection.

"For John" achieves its effects, in part, by anticipating—indeed parodying—orthodox expectations of its speaker's narcissism. It parades its insistent first-person voice, its emphatically domestic concerns ("the commonplaces" [34], the "kitchen" [35]), and its protagonist's prolonged self-scrutiny in the mirror. The poem resounds with images for the self, for self-admiration, idealization, and subjective pleasure. Lines end with terms of self-absorption ("mind," "mirror," "me," "myself," "private" [34]) that emphasize the narcissistic impulse at play. Yet the text's flamboyant narcissism is beguiling, masking the absence or dissipation of the self. Marjorie Perloff argues of postmodern poetry that "the Romantic or Modernist cult of personality has given way to what the new poets call 'the dispersal of the speaking subject,' the denial of the unitary, authoritative ego" (*Dance* x). However, I would contend that this fracturing or "dispersal of the speaking subject" is not unique to postmodern poetry and is carefully mapped in Sexton's poem. The fragmentation of the "unitary authoritarian ego" is represented in multiple and proliferating images of fracture and dissipation reminiscent of those in "The Double Image" and owing something to the characteristics of narcissism (a "fragmented" sense of self, and "identity diffusion" [Berman 25]) as perceived from certain psychoanalytic perspectives.

The self-assertion of the opening lines of "For John" is countermanded by a recognition of others ("you," "your," "something outside," "someone," "anyone" [34–35]). The characteristic confessional speaker does not emerge until line 5 and is swiftly counterbalanced by the "you"—the explicit (John) or implicit (the unspecified reader) addressee whose presence, although always latent in and instrumental to confession, is here unusually rendered visible within the text. The back and forth movement anticipates the exchanges between speaker, mother, and daughter in "The Double Image" (which appears immediately after "For John" in *To Bedlam and Part Way Back,* although it was written one year earlier). Further, the speaker and John/any reader share a mutually vengeful and predatory fate akin to that of Narcissus and Echo. Neither is able to satisfy his or her desire, both have reached the limits of identification, and neither can penetrate the boundary between self and other. This is the ever-present risk for confession: that it will not find an auditor and achieve realization.[7]

The poem addresses the critical hostility that seems to sustain many readings of confessional poetry. Its specific origins, arguably, lie in Sexton's response to a letter she had received from her mentor, the poet and teacher John Holmes, in which he expressed reservations about what he perceived to be the narrow narcissism of her work. Latent in the I/you exchange in the poem is a dialogue between Sexton (the implied author) and Holmes (the implied addressee). In identifying this letter as a possible source I do not, however, propose that it explains, or concede that it limits, the poem's potential meanings. (As Bonnie Costello argues of the overdetermination of sources in Marianne Moore's work: "This multiplicity of sources is quite different from the multiplicity of references" [6].) What I would contend is that Holmes's letter may be taken as a catalyst for the poem's self-conscious examination of larger confessional processes.

Scrutiny of the letter to Sexton, dated 8 February 1959, reveals the extent to which "For John" repudiates confessional poetry's detractors.[8] Her privileging of the "selfish death" may be read as a defiant challenge to Holmes's view that she should efface her "hospital and psychiatric experiences [which seem] to me very selfish." Holmes's letter accuses her of "forcing others to listen" and complains that, in her work, there is "nothing given the listeners, nothing that teaches them or helps them." He adjures her to "do something else, outside yourself." Sexton's speaker counters that she does teach something, that she offers a "lesson" (34) that is "worth learning." This is "something special" (35) and defiantly "something outside of myself."

"For John" insists that there is "sense" and "order" in even the most private and seemingly abject of experiences:

Not that it was beautiful,
but that, in the end, there was
a certain sense of order there;
something worth learning
in that narrow diary of my mind,
in the commonplaces of the asylum (34)

By opening the poem with the emphatic "Not," Sexton confronts from the outset the criticisms she anticipates and proceeds to refute them with her arguments in the subsequent two lines. The syntax of the first line refuses the chief motivation ascribed to Narcissus—that is, love of his own beauty. Sexton suggests that it is "not" the product (the "beautiful" object) that is worthy of attention but the process—the ordering, the reading, the making of "sense." The lesson that can be learned by scrutiny of the "narrow diary of my mind" and "the commonplaces of the asylum" is valuable because it is a lesson that can be shared. "Commonplaces" indicates the potential common ground that unites speaker and reader. Moreover, in its pun on commonplace book, it invokes the textualization, including that carried out in this very poem, by which the "lesson" will be delivered.

More generally, the opening lines of the poem foreground the hermeneutic processes of reading and evaluation by which meaning will be constructed. The opening line postulates a subject "it" that is never fully defined, remaining ambiguous throughout the poem in spite of the speaker's repeated efforts to identify and represent it. The reader's commitment and interpretative powers are first solicited and then held at bay by this persistent ontological uncertainty. He or she shares the speaker's uncertainty and (frustrated) desire for resolution. The poem thematizes this, inscribing within itself an interpretative place for the reader. In Hutcheon's terms, it is narcissistic in that "it encourages an active personal response to itself *and* encourages a space for that response within itself" (*Narcissistic* 141).

Fundamental to Sexton's representation in "For John" of how meaning is realized and dispersed are the metaphors of mirrors—first the "cracked mirror" (34) of line 7 and later the inverted glass bowl (line 18). The mirrors figure the text's own processes of contemplation and reflection. The poem concedes that narcissism is a frustrating and limiting practice, as the confessing subject's initial self-scrutiny in the mirror offers no reassurance: "my own selfish death / outstared me." She seeks in the mirror confirmation of her identity, yet is met with a disfigured reflection that is inverted; the living subject looks for signs of life and finds only evidence of death. We recall "The Double Image" and the distortion of the two women's images represented by the dual portraits. For Lacan, looking in the mirror is a progressive moment—a necessary step toward successful assumption of the "function as subject" (2)—but in this poem, there is no such progression. There is no pleasure in this literal and metaphorical introspection (nor, by extension, in the act of confession), and considerable psychic risk.

Here and subsequently, with the introduction of the metaphor of the glass bowl, the speaker gazes at the mirror expecting to see only her own self given back to her, but what she sees exceeds or "outstare[s]" her. In addition to her own face she sees reflected the larger context that surrounds or frames her; her context is thus perceived through and beyond the glass. Equally, when the reader contemplates the mirror (reads the poem), she thinks that she is looking at someone ("something") else. What she sees—alongside the putative object of her gaze—is herself in the process of observing. The shift is reified by the shift in line 11 from the address to an implied auditor to a specific addressee ("you" the reader). Thus in attending to this poem the reader recognizes her own participation in the discourse. As we saw with the indeterminate "it" of the poem's opening line, "For John" inscribes a place for the reader within the body of the text, rendering the public significance of what had once seemed merely private.

"For John" demonstrates that the narcissistic gesture becomes productive and meaningful only when it is shared. The "selfish" gaze must—if it is to mean anything "outside of myself"—be subject to dispersal and dissemination. The fragmentation of the cracked mirror is instrumental in bringing this shift to multiplicity about. The mirror in and of the text offers no clear image, no direct mimesis, but only multiple, scattered—though suggestive—shards. A similar process is figured in the lucky star in "An Obsessive Combination" that shines its "inside out." It is only by refraction that it externalizes its meaning. The language of Sexton's poetry, then, is multiplicitous, elusive; it functions less as a unifying mirror than as a prism, splitting and projecting fractured and elliptical images of its subject.

Consider the image in "For John" of the inverted glass bowl:

I tapped my own head;
it was glass, an inverted bowl.
It is a small thing
to rage in your own bowl. (34)

The inverted bowl, while sharing the mimetic properties of a mirror, is simultaneously transparent. It has the potential to contain and to reveal, to reflect and refract. The image signifies the potential entrapment and vulnerability of the subject (Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* is an obvious palimpsest).[9] It discloses whatever lies within it and permits the observer to see all sides of the object, to gain a complete impression.[10] It also displays its own external properties, its hermetic identity. Revealing both its inside and its outside, it stands as a metaphor for the confessional poem and the larger narcissistic process by which the subject reaches a reconciliation with the object world. That the speaker "tapped" her "own head" confirms the potential contiguity of self and other and the fluidity of the boundaries between the private and the public. For "tapped" signifies both the process of siphoning insights from inside the head and the act of beating out a pattern (a poem?) on the outside for the edification of others. The speaker may tap—make a sound—either to initiate a dialogue or cause an echo.[11] The image insinuates the indivisibility of subject and discourse, product and process.

The inverted bowl, like the earlier cracked mirror, gives back fragmented images (the awkward bowl's "cracked stars shining" [34] sustain the original disfigurement in and of the cracked mirror). As Jonathan Miller points out: "in contrast to a plain or flat surface, which faithfully reproduces the proportions of whatever it reflects, a curved surface systematically disfigures it" (43). As an image of the poem itself, the bowl suggests the confessional text's own distortions and unreliability. Sexton's mirrors are always imperfect, crazed, curved, oblique, or, as in "The Double Image," set directly opposite another mirror so that all one sees is an endless, imprisoning cascade of reflections that allows no space for the growth and development of the subject. Self-reflection is not what it might seem, and gives back an image that is attenuated, fractured, separated, and dispersed.

Mimesis is to be treated warily; there is no such thing as direct, unproblematic reflection. The act of mirroring, we find, is fraught with error and uncertainty. It is both multiplicitous and duplicitous. We should note that Abrams's generally positive account of poetic mimesis is only able to refer to its subject in a sequence of synonyms that connote distortion and imprecision: "counterfeiting," "feigning" (11). Thus the representation of subjectivity or experience that confessional poetry (specifically "For John") offers is to be understood as a copy of or approximation to the original, but not as identical with it. What confessional writing does is contemplate and expose the complexity of identity, the absence or elusiveness (even in this apparently self-expressive mode) of a unified, homogenous subject.[12]

Sexton's poem presents a fundamentally narcissistic moment—a moment of crisis in the subject's sense of self and her relation to the external world. This is laid bare for contemplation by both speaker and reader. It is the potential communality of experience here, the fact that narcissism forms "a place in the regular course of human sexual development" (Freud 65), that forms the heart of Sexton's argument and aesthetic defense. We all go through this process, and the poem reminds us of this, inviting us to revisit it:

> This is something I would never find
> in a lovelier place, my dear,
> although your fear is anyone's fear,
> like an invisible veil between us all . . .
> and sometimes in private,
> my kitchen, your kitchen,
> my face, your face. (35)

The implicit I/you dialogue that has sustained the whole poem is here rendered more generally inclusive. "Anyone" invokes Everyman and registers the broadening of the speaker's attention from a specific reader (John) to a wider group; "us all" encapsulates both speaker and multiple readers. In the simultaneously transparent and reflective bowl, we look for self and find other, we look for other and find self. What we see is both "my kitchen" and "your kitchen," "my face" and "your face." Narcissism is revealed to be a public and discursive rather than private and hermetic gesture. The personal preoccupation ("my") gives way to public responsibility ("your"). The quiet, balanced, closing lines of the poem, with their symmetry and soft diminuendo, mimic the gentle sound of an echo tailing off:

and sometimes in private,
my kitchen, your kitchen,
my face, your face.

John Holmes's concluding message to Sexton in the letter that arguably inspired the poem specifically alludes to Ovid's tale. Holmes's anxiety about Sexton's writing is galvanized by his fear that Sexton's fate may repeat that of Narcissus: "You must liberate your gift, and let it create new life, not gaze always hypnotized on death and the wreck of nerves" (a comment that arguably provides a source for Sexton's line "my own selfish death / outstared me"). "For John" ultimately answers confessionalism's critics by expressly embracing the very process against which they warn. It not only explains, it shows. Sexton demonstrates that narcissism does not necessarily mean introspective stasis. As in Ovid's tale, where Narcissus's legacy is "a flower with a circle of white petals round a yellow centre" (87), Sexton's speaker's self-absorption is productive. It is transformed into "something outside of myself," something that at least "ought" to be "special / for someone."

It is illuminating to consider "For John" in relation to a prominent postconfessional poem that takes up the question of self-mirroring: John Ashbery's "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror." Ashbery's poem contemplates Parmigianino's painting of that name and, in particular, the resonance of the convex mirror that is both the source (the artist paints from his reflection in it) and product of the painting (the finished portrait is painted on a convex wooden form that replicates that of the mirror). Ashbery, too, acknowledges that such a self-portrait is distorted and distorting, indeed "that you could be fooled for a moment / Before you realize the reflection / Isn't yours" (194). In Ashbery's poem, as in Sexton's, the convex mirror privileges surface over depth. For Ashbery "everything is surface. The surface is what's there" (190). In both poems the public display of the curved mirror emphasizes the outward-looking, social, discursive nature of what had previously been understood as a purely introspective narcissism. The imperative in each is not merely to gaze upon the self ("It is a small thing / to rage in your own bowl") but to share that which is found with the reader. Sexton wields her glass bowl so that its "cracked stars" shine forth, disseminating meaning. Ashbery's convex mirror similarly reaches outward. It is refracted in the "sawtoothed fragments" (191) of a puddle and finally reverberates more widely throughout "the city" in "the gibbous / Mirrored eye of an insect" (204) which, like Sexton's crazed mirror, functions as a prism.

As we saw in the opening lines of her poem, Sexton confronts the reader's reluctance to participate in the hermeneutic process that it reveals. Her defiant wielding of the bowl forces the reader to participate in the narcissistic process, prevents him or her from looking away, inscribes a place for the reader within the text as one part of the mirrored scene:

> And if you turn away
> because there is no lesson here
> I will hold my awkward bowl,
> with all its cracked stars shining
> like a complicated lie,
> and fasten a new skin around it
> as if I were dressing an orange
> or a strange sun. (34–35)

Equally, Ashbery's poem reminds us that the self-portrait "is a metaphor / Made to include us, we are a part of it" (196–97). Both poems, then, may be read as a contemplation of the process by which art (Parmigianino's painting, Sexton's poem, Ashbery's self-portrait with a "pencil" [191]) enters into a productive and mutually sustaining relationship with its audience.

The surface of Parmigianino's self-portrait in Ashbery's poem glows with potential significations: it is a "silver blur" (192), its "cover burnishes," it has a "disguising radiance" (204). Sexton's bowl, too, radiates meaning. However, this is born not of authenticity but of artifice. Recognizing that alone it may not compel or retain the reader—indeed, that its very transparency or nakedness may repel him or her—the speaker takes steps to render her "lesson" more acceptable, dressing or disguising the bowl in luminous "orange" so that it shines like a "strange sun." As the poem's argument develops, what we see is emphatically not a pure, unmediated reflection of lived experience as might perhaps be expected of confessional poetry. Rather, it is a fabrication, an object masked or disguised, dressed with a "new skin." In a genre apparently predicated on revelation, this metaconfession that the essence of confession lies in dressing up, rather than undressing, in disguise rather than nakedness, in deceit rather than honesty, is supremely telling.

Abrams, as we have seen, distinguishes between mimetic and expressive forms of art, between the mirror and the lamp. Perloff too posits a difference between postmodern and lyric forms of poetry based on a distinction between "artifice" and "authenticity." I would contend that Sexton's simultaneously reflective and luminous bowl refuses to choose between these aesthetics. The "glass bowl shining" both reflects and reveals. However, both functions are imperfect. The reflective surface is "awkward," "cracked," and "complicated," offering no clear mimesis. The sun, instead of merely figuring illumination and insight, is veiled and disguised; dressed in a "new skin," it cannot penetrate with directness or clarity but must carefully screen its message. In both cases, something ostensibly transparent or luminous is rendered translucent such that the confessional subject ostensibly being reflected or expressed is obscured by a crazed or veiled surface. However, with its self-consciously selected metaphors suggestive of the refraction and diffusion of light—of the prismatic splitting of its source into scattered elements—"For John" ensures that its meaning is shared. Something apparently singular, personal, and solipsistic is made multiple, social, discursive.

For self-reflexivity to be identified as characteristic of Ashbery's writing (and of the work of a number of other postmodern writers) it has been necessary to deny its presence in Sexton's work—to reduce confessionalism to this emergent poetry's other. (Such a will to classify is foreshadowed, perhaps, in Ashbery's suggestion in "Self-Portrait" that "If they are to become classics / They must decide which side they are on" [196]). Thus Harold Bloom declares that Ashbery "writes out of so profound a subjectivity as to make 'confessional' verse seem as self-defeating as that mode truly has been, from Coleridge (its inventor) down to Lowell and his disciples" (117–18). And Laurence Lieberman celebrates Ashbery's presentation of self as "swept clear of melodrama, the news-hawking debris of personality, all the detritus comprising the stock-in-trade of the confessional poets' school" (23). I would suggest, however, that the vehemence of these rejections of the confessional other reveals—while it attempts to deny—a profound commonality of poetic interests.

Marjorie Perloff sees as characteristic of modern (that is, pre-postmodernist) poetry the eventual realization of "some sort of epiphany, a moment of insight or vision with which the poem closes" (*Dance* 156–57). Yet, as we have seen in "For John," "An Obsessive Combination," and the other poems mentioned here, this is not a characteristic of Sexton's work. Rather, her poetry features an arguably postmodernist tendency toward equivocation and indeterminacy, toward provisionality, uncertainty, and evasion. Sexton's reluctance to conclude her writing on a resounding, authoritative, and thus normative and reassuring note is a sign of refusal to concede to totalization and of a wish to keep multiple interpretive possibilities open. Hence the multifaceted bowl of "For John" and the many-pointed star of "An Obsessive Combination": insight is always complex and diffuse. Sexton's poetry thus seeks the middle ground, the medial space between the outside and the inside, the public and the private, the mirror and the lamp (equally, between lies and truth, obfuscation and confession, artifice and authenticity). While exploiting the materiality of the mirror, Sexton's writing's primary interest is in the compelling intangibility of the reflection.

The received history of American poetry is the history of a movement from an impersonal, modernist aesthetic to a personal, lyrical, confessional narcissism and on to a cool, self-reflexive, linguistically sophisticated postmodernism. Sexton's poetry, I have suggested, transgresses received generic boundaries and problematizes this trajectory. By redefining our understanding of the apparent narcissism of her early work we can see that the profound self-reflexivity, the language play, and the undermining of processes of representation and revelation that are thought to characterize avant-garde and postmodernist poetic forms alone are, in fact, central to Sexton's poetics.

Notes

1. *Anne Sexton: The Complete Poems* is the source of all the poems I quote except "An Obsessive Combination," which is from *Selected Poems of Anne Sexton.*

2. Other important post-Freudian readings of narcissism include those of Otto Kernberg and Heinz Kohut, psychiatrists whose work, although offering entirely divergent perspectives on the condition, has dominated the understanding of narcissism in the United States since the 1970s. See Berman 20 ff.

3. Interestingly, as Juliet Mitchell points out, Freud does not mention the role of Echo in his interpretation of the Narcissus myth (30).

4. Middlebrook speculates that "An Obsessive Combination" was written during August 1958 (124). However, as it is apparent that Sexton studied Hopkins's poetry during her time as a student in Robert Lowell's writing class (September 1958 to 1959), it is arguable that her poem originates at least one month later. On Lowell and Hopkins, see Hamilton (78) and Lowell (167–70).

5. See Middlebrook 98–99 on Sexton's use of acrostics.

6. The mother's portrait is perceived as "a cave of a mirror" (38). Unrecognized by previous commentators on this poem, Sexton's linking of the mirror and the cave is profoundly significant, paralleling Echo's retreat to the caves in Ovid's story.

7. Heinz Kohut, a leading figure in the psychology of narcissism, notes the importance of empathy on the part of the observer/analyst to the resolution of primitive narcissism (Berman 31–32).

8. Manuscripts in the Anne Sexton collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center indicate that the poem was drafted on 12 February 1959.

9. Sexton's poem was probably critiqued in one of Robert Lowell's Boston University workshops in the spring of 1959. Plath audited the class alongside Sexton, George Starbuck, and others. She first joined the group on 24 February 1959 and in her journal entry for the next day uses the image of a bell jar (470). One month later (29 March 1959) the seeds of the plot of the novel are recorded in her journal. The bell jar motif had been used once before by Plath (in July 1952) to describe the ennui of summer vacations. Sexton's poem, with its image of the inverted glass bowl, may have prompted Plath to revisit the metaphor. Arguably, Sexton's use of the image in her sophisticated exploration of writing, gender, and subjectivity offered Plath exactly the figure she needed to represent Esther Greenwood's mixed sense of vulnerability and visibility.

10. As Jean-Jacques Rousseau explains in his *Confessions:* "I should like in some way to make my soul transparent to the reader's eye, and for that purpose I am trying to present it from all points of view, to show it in all lights" (169).

11. The influence of Henry James's *The Golden Bowl* is apparent here. Sexton annotated her copy of the book throughout, and there are many resemblances between the properties of his bowl and hers. In addition, the image of tapping is used to similar effect in both texts. In *The Golden Bowl,* Maggie has (metaphorically)

> sounded with a tap or two one of the rare porcelain plates. She had knocked, in short—though she could scarcely have said whether for admission or for what [. . .] and had waited to see what would happen. Something *had* happened: it was as if a sound, at her touch, after a little, had come back to her from within. (328)

12. Christina Britzolakis makes a related point in connection with Plath's use of mirror metaphors in her journals: "ironically, these are almost invariably linked with moments of specular mis- or non-recognition in which the sub-

ject is encountered as abject, resistant otherness" (16) and are seen as "the sign of a self-reflexivity which is alternately paralyzing and enabling" (17).

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Amy Gerstler's Rhetoric of Marriage

Rise B. Axelrod and Steven Gould Axelrod

Amy Gerstler's many poems dealing with romance and weddings ironize the customs of patriarchal marriage and, in an allied project, the norms of lyric and narrative discourse.[1] In retelling and subverting some familiar marital stories, the texts reconfigure storytelling itself, pointing toward new spaces and new opportunities for both amatory relations and textuality. Although Gerstler's scrolling texts tell stories of a sort, they are disjointed ones, filled with hints, echoes, innuendoes, and black holes. Stylistically, they seem inspired by Gertrude Stein, evoking the plot of language more than a plot of character and event; one might say they try to recreate Browning's "My Last Duchess" in the manner of Stein's *Tender Buttons.* These poems, then, ward off any attempts to impose a coherent interpretive schema on them. They remain a field of implications, their lively, witty, and overtly artificial style contrasting to the morose marital melodramas their images often suggest. If the poems hint at the uncertainties and brutalities of love and ask how and why "women and girls have been cast as the custodians of everyday existence" (Smith and Gerstler 1), they obliquely suggest the nervous anxiety of our relations with language as well.

Like other postmodern texts, particularly those influenced by the Language movement, Gerstler's prose poems foreground the play of language and invite the reader to participate in the construction of meanings that are always contingent. These poems invite the reader to recall, however vaguely, the precursory cultural texts that they revise and ironize. At the same time, each sentence and section of a Gerstler text does not quite issue seamlessly from the one that came before. This slight amnesia, this sense of narrative disruption, places the reader in the difficult position of straining both to remember and to start over. Things resist complete understanding, and the poems thus interfere with an Enlightenment logic of linear narrativity, opening new spaces of collaborativity, bafflement, and ironized knowledge in which the reader's awareness is invited to roam. By bending and reversing their precursory texts and by breaking the bond between sentences and sections, Gerstler's poems reverse the anxiety Plato expressed in the *Phaedrus:* that because writing provides a better means of preserving information than does orality, it threatens to render human memory itself obsolete. Gerstler's poems highlight the problematics of written discourse, requiring yet thwarting the operations of both memory and understanding.

In the manner of scrolling news programs and commercials on TV or refreshable pages on the Internet, Gerstler's texts mobilize and highlight elements of dissonance, juxtaposition, seriality, periphrasis, parataxis, and non sequitur. And just as her poems formally resemble electronic media (or malls), so they embed shards of prior texts (or products), materials ranging from the Hebrew Scriptures, Gertrude Stein, and T. S. Eliot to fairy tales, infomercials, Walt Disney films, and Norman Rockwell souvenirs. These poems illustrate Marjorie Perloff's claim that in postmodern texts, "the discourses of art and the mass media are not merely exchangeable; rather theirs is a relationship of enormous variation and complexity" (xiii). The poems inscribe themselves sideways into a network of incommensurate narratives, images, and lyric moments. Gerstler has explained that she loves the "poetic energy" that comes from "the attempt to marry literary and popular culture—'high' and 'low' art" ("What Is American" 2). She tries in her poetry to deploy the

> irrepressible melodramatics of American English . . . with its distinctive mixture of slang and preachiness, the elevated and the silly, the heady and the democratic, the lofty and the colloquial, reverence and irreverence, the straightforward and the shifty. (1)

If Stein's language is situated "midway between representation and abstraction," as Peter Nicholls has said (119), Gerstler's appears to be located midway between popular culture and the avant garde.

Gerstler's oeuvre, reflecting its inheritance from folk and popular culture, is replete with texts about romances and weddings. Yet three prose poems seem to engage in a particularly intense intertextual conversation: "White Marriage" and "The True Bride," published in that sequence in her volume *The True Bride* (1986), and "Marriage," published in her next volume, *Bitter Angel* (1990). They explore the cathected triangulation of love, indifference, and hatred in an asymmetrical gender universe. They also reflect complexly on the way that words, like human subjects, inevitably miss the mark. They demonstrate that the attempt to "marry" literary and popular culture is as fraught as the effort of human beings to wed—though the intertextual marriages seem, on the whole, to provide more pleasure than do the depicted interpersonal ones.

These prose poems are frankly cinematic. Gerstler says that she makes lists of movie titles to use in constructing poems: "I realized one reason I felt drawn to the packed, colorful titles of American films is that so many of them seem to present the funny, irrepressible melodramatics of American English in a nutshell" ("What Is American" 1). She has composed one whole poem, "The Bride Goes Wild," entirely out of film titles. That poem ends: "Naked, the Invisible Woman Cries and Whispers / Nothing but the Truth, Too Scared to Scream" (*Medicine* 37). The three poems under discussion here brim with phrases that sound like invented movie titles: "the keeper's daughter," "the prettiest invalid," "the plight of desire" (*True Bride* 43, 45; *Bitter Angel* 62). Moreover, the prose-poem form itself, with its blocklike arrangement of print, mimics a frame of film or a movie screen.

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"White Marriage," the first of these poems, absorbs and parodies a wide variety of cultural sources that use the lighthouse keeper and his daughter as a trigger for sentimentality, idealization, and ultimately consumer desire. Perhaps the most famous of these sources is the story of the aptly named Grace Darling, who rescued nine survivors from a shipwreck off England's Northumberland coast in 1838. She thereby became what Jessica Mitford has called a "media star" of the Victorian era (130), celebrated in news story, legend, and song. In a similar vein, an 1864 tale by J. R. Hutchinson called "The Lighthouse Keeper's Daughter" tells of a motherless girl who, when her father is kidnapped, stands on a Bible to light the lamps. More recently, the Disney film *Pete's Dragon* (1977) tells the story of a lighthouse keeper's kindly daughter who befriends a runaway orphan named Pete. A Norman Rockwell painting, reproduced on dishes and mugs and available for purchase on the web, pictures a lighthouse keeper's young daughter faithfully mending her father's old jacket (*CollectibleShopping*). Another such painting, by Charles Wysocki, shows a lighthouse keeper's teenage daughter being politely courted by a suitor named Jayson. Wysocki comments, "Old lighthouses with their romantic ambience never fail to please my artistic appetite. Every artist I know wants to put onto canvas these dramatic sentinels of safe passage" (*Country-Art*).

Gerstler's "White Marriage"—a three-part poem or perhaps a sequence of three individual poems—begins with the central motifs of this lighthouse tradition intact, but the tone has gone haywire:

> 1. The keeper's daughter, I grew up in a lighthouse, pale as an iceberg, surrounded by water, and father's groggy demands. No mother to teach me to blush. We had a small orchard, in the midst of a wicked reef, prey to wind, wave and quake. I was constantly wet, had occasional chest pains, no visitors. Father laced his oatmeal with cognac that washed up in crates on our beach. He stayed drunk and silent for days. I was permitted to walk as far as the sea wall. One sunset, while collecting mussels for supper, I saw a young couple under the dock. Two dark postures, heads bent together like animals drinking, or grazing. The girl's back was against a piling. I thought "Those barnacles are sharp," but perhaps she didn't feel it. They couldn't see me. They were busy, feeding. From the pit of my stomach, a burning sensation radiated out to my limbs, and my joints went watery. Father had lied to me: that action was no lullaby. At home, I couldn't stop staring at my father's bald spot. He was yawning. An aging tattooed man, with little understanding of life on dry land. Could I imagine my hair being smoothed by any other hand? He said, "Come here, Celeste. You look feverish." He made me lie down. Not even sleep shields me from the power of his frown.
> (*True Bride* 43)

Like most of the lighthouse keepers' daughters evoked in traditional art and commerce, this daughter crucially lacks a mother. She has no one "to teach [her] to blush," to indoctrinate her into what Amy Moorman Robbins calls the "function of female modesty in popular American ideology" (139). The keeper himself, however, does not at all resemble the devoted patriarch and public servant depicted in legend and painting. Rather, he is an "aging tattooed man" who makes "groggy demands," stays "drunk and silent for days," and exerts control over his daughter through "the power of his frown." Instead of lovingly mending her father's clothes, the daughter seethes in resentment. Instead of being courted by an innocent teenage boy, she spies on lovers who are "grazing" or "feeding" on each other—an echo of a scene in Frank Bidart's "Ellen West" and one of the numerous suggestions of cannibalism that appear in Gerstler's marital poems. Finally, instead of following a path of loving innocence, the daughter in subsequent sections engages in a strangely perverse marriage. There is no love anywhere in "White Marriage," not between father and daughter or between husband and wife. Even the observed lovers seem to experience lust rather than love, or perhaps even pain rather than lust. *Graze* can also mean abrade, and the woman's back is pressed against a piling covered with sharp barnacles (which "perhaps she didn't feel," a possible projection of the speaker's own emotional numbness). The text provides us with multiple images of aggressive, hostile, or indifferent males and withdrawn, resentful, or vengeful females. Instead of being a "sentinel of safe passage," this lighthouse is a place of isolation and discord.

Whereas traditional lighthouse artworks tell a coherent narrative, Gerstler's revision of the myth is marked by gaps and new starts. This paratactic quality becomes particularly apparent in the poem's second section, which begins with an abrupt shift in scene and image:

> 2. I only hold still for this because you're named for my favorite angel . . . the one who protects others with no thought for himself. One who thirsts for deeper knowledge of me. One who was raised on a small estate by the river. One who's seen too much and so bites his tongue, bides his time. One who recovered from scarlet fever, and ever since understands the animals' language. One who cultivates plants with sword-shaped leaves and plots rebellions. One who experiences the "joy-on-awakening" that field workers feel returning home. We see them from our bedroom window, shouldering their picks and rakes, as we spend another Christmas together, locked in this brothel. I'm sorry I socked you. I know this arrangement protects me from worse enslavements. You and I were in the same orphanage, in another life. Don't laugh, I'm psychic. Stale bread, ugly nuns, and a game we played: queen and slave. One night you pulled aside my covers, pretending to hold the royal tent-flap open for me, just as you're doing now. Why, sometimes, in this palace of strangers, I'm almost homesick for that miserable place. (43–44)

Is the speaker still the keeper's daughter of the first section, now grown? Is the nameless lover she addresses here the husband of the third section or perhaps the man with whom she had an affair? Or is he a lover who came between her repressed childhood and her sexless marriage? "White Marriage" raises but does not answer such basic narrative questions. It starts in medias res and begins again in medias res with each new section. The speaker's initial assertion in the second section, "I only hold still for this," implies that she has some agency in the relationship, and yet she apparently yields to something she would rather say no to, as a subsequent sentence, "I'm sorry I socked you" implies. That sentence inverts a motif in George Cukor's classic marital narrative *The Philadelphia Story* (1940), in which Tracy Lord's younger sister Dinah expresses the hope that Tracy's once and future husband Dexter will "sock" her again. Gerstler's text reverses the violent action while removing all hints of affection and fulfillment from the story. The man the speaker has punched may be "named for [her] favorite angel," but neither he nor she is at all angelic. (Making lists of favorite angels, by the way, is a traditional sentimental activity for young girls that has now become a popular Internet pastime.)

The speaker's catalogue of the characteristics of her favorite angel contains contradictory and puzzling elements. The angel is selfless and nurturing, yet he grows plants with swordlike leaves. The relevance of his upbringing "on a small estate by the river" remains unexplained, like a detail out of Ashbery's "The Tennis Court Oath." The logical chain leading from recovery from illness to an understanding of the animals' language is similarly opaque. Moreover, the speaker's reason for spending such a long time enumerating the angel's traits remains unclear as well. Finally, the two sentences that end the catalogue subvert any possibility that it has amounted to meaningful description. In the first of these sentences, the field workers' "joy-on-awakening" is a metaphor for the angel's, but in the very next it is something the speaker and her lover actually witness. A comparison within a comparison thus changes into something actually perceived, pulling the rug out from under the discourse, revealing its fragility and mobility. In a similar vein, despite her assertion that she has "socked" the man named for her favorite angel, and despite her fantasy of herself as a "queen" and him as her "slave" (or is it the other way around?), she continues to view her present condition as a form of enslavement—though she claims it is an "arrangement" that "protects [her] from worse enslavements," perhaps like the bondage to her father in the first section or to her husband in the third. Finally, the speaker terms this house a "brothel," a surprising epithet to describe the place of a lovers' tryst.

The third section (or poem) of "White Marriage," which may either be a continuation of the preceding scene or a new scene with a different couple, begins with a question:

> 3. *Why so quiet, dear?* Just thinking. Remember shortly after we met, when you put your foot down and decreed: NO MORE KISSING? I lifted my skirt, so you'd see what you were talking about going without. But you were right. Who needs that salad of wilted limbs, followed by a procession of whimpering, living misgivings? Bless the oak board that divides our bed. A wave of vapor, really a family of white herons, rises from the weedy marsh to settle on our evergreen lake. Each evening they make this short migration, from where they feed to where they'll sleep. It's comforting to have a routine. Once I ventured out. A man left his purple mark on my neck, below the collarbone. Luckily, my husband and I always undress in the dark, so no explanation was necessary. And the blemish, sin's grape colored stain, went away. (44)

With its initial question, *"Why so quiet, dear?"* the poem begins again in medias res, this time in the middle of nothing, a lack of interaction that makes socking someone seem almost friendly by comparison. A text that began by invoking sentimental narratives of the lighthouse keeper's daughter has emerged as a postmodernist pastiche of Meredith's "Modern Love," Frost's "Home Burial," Plath's "The Jailer," and Eliot's dialogue between an alienated wife and her uncommunicative husband in *The Waste Land*. The *Waste Land* echo is especially strong:

> "Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak.
> "What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
> "I never know what you are thinking. Think." (138)

Whereas in Eliot's poem, it is the wife—nagging and neurasthenic—who asks the questions, in Gerstler's poem it is the husband who asks the question and the wife who keeps her answer to herself. Nevertheless, both poems dramatize the sexual and emotional failure of a marriage. The wife in Gerstler's prose poem tries adultery, apparently finding it even less satisfying than her "routine" of complete despair. Although the sentences evoke events, objects, and fantasies, and frequently imply a blank desperation, they consistently omit causation. For example, why has the husband forbidden kissing? If the wife agrees with him ("Who needs that?"), then why has she "ventured out," and why has she ceased such wandering? All we know for sure is that whereas conventional depictions of lighthouse keepers' daughters are cohesive tales, this one tells a story with pieces cut out of it. Readers are positioned like the girl in the Grimm fairy tale "The True Bride," upon which Gerstler's second marriage poem is based. We are armed only with a spoon "full of holes" with which to empty a pond (Grimm 754). As Gerstler suggests in her third prose poem, "Marriage," which not incidentally appears in a volume titled *Bitter Angel,* the master narrative of heterosexual romance is "a world, tiny and curved, reflected in a spoon. Perilous as a clean sheet of paper" (62). In place of a linear narrative, Gerstler gives us the detritus of dolor. Whereas the inherited versions of the tale envisioned both the lighthouse and narrativity itself as "sentinels of safe passage," Gerstler's "White Marriage" envisions each of its domesticated spaces as a locus of pain and confusion, a "palace of strangers," as she writes in part 2. This image of a "palace of strangers" evokes Freud's "The Uncanny," but it more specifically derives from Isaiah, itself a source for Eliot's *Waste Land:* "For thou hast made of a city a heap, of a defensed city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city" (624). Gerstler suggests that as readers and embodied beings, we inhabit an unhomelike home, at once alien and familiar.

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"The True Bride," a dramatic monologue spoken by the husband rather than the wife, functions as a sort of answer to "White Marriage." The phrase *true bride,* though it appears frequently in the fairy tales preserved by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, plays a particularly central role in the tale of the same name. In the Grimm "True Bride," a motherless servant girl is forced by her stepmother to perform impossible tasks such as collecting feathers into piles and emptying a great pond with a slotted spoon. When her stepmother dies, the servant betroths herself to the king's son, who then disappears, forgets about her, and betroths himself to another. The servant girl finds him again after some years, attends a great festival at his father's court, kisses him, and "in a moment it was as if scales fell from his eyes, and he recognized the true bride" (759). He hurries her to his magic castle, where "the entire court was assembled, and the priest was waiting to marry the bridegroom to the true bride" (760). In a manner reminiscent of Anne Sexton's *Transformations,* Gerstler's "The True Bride" revises and parodies the traditional story in order to ironize its gender implications. Gerstler has frequently returned to fairy tales in her career. Her latest volume, for example, includes a poem called "Scorched Cinderella," which retells the old story from the point of view of the wicked stepsisters (*Medicine* 17–18). Moreover, she has collaborated with the visual artist Alexis Smith on an installation titled after the Grimm fairy tale "The Sorcerer's Apprentice." It includes sculptures, collages, wall texts, and dozens of brooms that, according to the poet, "become a chorus of Cinderella-like presences, . . . seemingly homely props of housekeeping [that] may lead a secret, perhaps magical life" (Smith and Gerstler 1)—not unlike the "Sorcerer's Apprentice" sequence in the Disney film *Fantasia* (1940).

Gerstler's "The True Bride" gives a sadomasochistic twist to the Grimm fairy tale, mingling it with memories of *The Fall of the House of Usher, The Blithedale Romance, Psycho,* and *The Collector.* Whereas the Grimm version of "The True Bride" focuses on a young woman who must defeat a censorious mother figure and then lure an attractive but reluctant man to marry her, Gerstler's version emanates from the husband's obsessed and fetishistic perspective. By no means reluctant, he makes plain his capacity to love only a disabled and passive woman, one whom he can absolutely dominate:

> Elaine sleeps most of the day. She's the prettiest invalid I've ever seen, and I collect them. Her name means *illumination,* which I think refers to her skin: luminous and unused as a newborn's. Her breath smells lofty as an attic with cedar beam ceiling, ancient papers, forgotten bottles that once held medicine or scent. Limp Raggedy Ann dolls, and old bath toys.
>
> I've always been attracted to crippled women. I'm convinced that if they were pruned in early girlhood, the beauty of what survives (face, neck, hands) is intensified. My potted palm grows greener and puts forth new shoots after I nip off a few ailing fronds.
>
> Elaine's legs are all that's wrong with her. Her mother was

> rushed one day when Elaine was three, and prepared her salad carelessly. Germs on the unwashed romaine lettuce gave Elaine polio. Earmarked her for me. The outdoors are still myth to her. She doesn't completely believe weather or landscape. Phonograph records, stains, telegrams, TV, calendars—these are her dear flat realities. Her mother tongue. Trees, golf courses, airplanes, and hail she distrusts as too good to be true . . .
>
> She braves perpetual headaches, brought on by harsh and ruinous daylight. Invalids are experts in bed. Bed and bath are their habitats. When I stroked her shoulder through her nightgown for the first time, Elaine was silent for a while. Then she said "Please go now. I'm praying." I love her odd remarks and mind, formed in confinement. These days, I move my hand closer, to sculpt her muscles and she says "oh yes," then later, impatient, her hair all unbraided, she says "Hurry up." Her bed's my pillow-piled shrine. After our long phone conversations, I know she hangs up a black receiver that's taken on the smell of her unwashed hair, and the receiver feels slightly greasy. (*True Bride* 45–46)

Gerstler's bride, beyond recalling Grimm fairy tales like "Little Briar-Rose" (or "Sleeping Beauty") and "The Girl without Hands," also suggests the iconic figure of Frida Kahlo, who was similarly stricken with a childhood bout of polio, similarly under her husband's thumb, similarly injured, and, in her final years, bedridden. But she resembles Frida Kahlo without the art—without the anger, humor, pride, imagination, and creative accomplishment. It is worth noting that Kahlo's persona is now a part of our cultural lore. Like the lighthouse keeper's daughter, she adorns mugs and plates for sale on the Internet (Moses 5). She is the subject of books, films, and documentaries. Like Grimm's true bride, Kahlo is now an image that organizes the popular sense of feminine character and destiny, an image that Gerstler's prose poem wishes to condense, distort, and expose.

Believing that if women are "pruned in early girlhood, the beauty of what survives (face, neck, hands) is intensified," the husband reveals that his passion for protective control is powered by sadism. He wishes to collect women like specimens and to mutilate them to fit his desires. Whereas the female protagonist of Grimm's "True Bride" exhibits the necessary spunk and sense to achieve her goal—which is nevertheless a position of subservience—Gerstler's true bride does little beyond reacting passive-aggressively to her husband's touch, saying alternatively, "Please go now. I'm praying," "oh yes," and "Hurry up." She justifies her husband's misogynist fear of female inscrutability, rejection, and sexuality, and half gratifies his wish for female nonexistence.

The poem ends in a Saharan fantasy:

> Once I held her hand while she napped. She murmured the word "Africa." Her favorite desert, the Sahara, is a melted margarine color on her Atlas map. *That's why she liked it*. She's exquisite. One piece of zwieback for breakfast. Her luncheon is lemonade. At dinner my true bride sniffs and nibbles my wrist. She insists her strong foreign coffee be bitter, and smiles as she tastes that it is, through her red chapped lips.
>
> She must stand up. We must travel. She'll learn to fry eggs and wear sandals. She'll tan, feel bee stings and slaps. I want to slobber on her neck, then lap her wet hem. Her thirst for suffering quenched, now she's famished for a better destiny.
>
> An army of true brides like her, hobbling women, are crossing a desert. The sand is yellow. They limp and crawl over the dunes, making new ripples and waves on the soft desert floor. They're not afraid of snakes. They're hunting for husbands. Their backpacks are filled with thick sandwiches. Bait. Pyjamas and open robes flutter in the hot breeze. Occasionally one stumbles, loses her shirt, but it's like falling into a pit of raw sugar, it doesn't hurt. She brushes herself off and gets up again. These crippled women don't wear sunglasses, their eyes glint like diamonds. Their gaze could cut glass, or fuse the sand they're knee deep in. I tell Elaine that this dream of so many making a pilgrimage towards us, through her Sahara and mine, a handful of scorching sand sprinkled on a bland map, is my ideal pornography. (46)

Reduced to body parts at the outset, the true bride ultimately exhibits both Gerstler's trademark cannibalism (she "nibbles" her husband's wrist) and anorexia (a diet of zwieback and lemonade). For her, the desert suggests both a yearning for food and life and a reality of hunger and emptiness. It is only a melted margarine *color* on a map. For the speaker, the desert scene facilitates his "ideal pornography." But again, his army of hobbling brides crosses a desert that is mapped but not real. Highlighting artificiality at every turn, "The True Bride" invites us to consider estranged desire within a structure that wards off the systems of belief usually associated with classical lyric and romantic narrative.

If the bride in "White Marriage" accepts her husband's terms of an unconsummated marriage, she also resists it by socking him, committing adultery, and indulging in rebellious fantasies. The speaker of "The True Bride," conversely, represents his fetishized and perhaps imaginary wife as a conglomeration of body parts, a "crippled" being who lives on media rather than in the flesh. These two prose poems show a wife's and a husband's contrastive viewpoints. They reinvoke traditional narratives of heteronormative courting and marriage in order to skew them, to locate new and disturbing meanings in them, and to reveal hidden stories lurking within the old stories and within taletelling itself.

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Gerstler returns to the marriage theme in "Marriage," published four years after the initial two poems. As in "White Marriage," the woman speaks, but this monologue suggests a plot whose ending is open and contingent. Whereas the two earlier poems represent an achieved and already ruinous marriage, this prose poem takes place on the wedding day. The entire poem follows:

> Romance is a world, tiny and curved, reflected in a spoon. Perilous as a clean sheet of paper. Why begin? Why sully and crumple a perfectly good surface? Lots of reasons. Sensuality, need for relief, curiosity. Or it's your mission. You could blame the mating instinct: a squat little god carved from shit-colored wood. NO NO NO. It's not dirty. The plight of desire, a longing to consort, to dally, to bend over, lose yourself . . . be rubbed till you're shiny as a new minted utensil. A monogrammed butterknife, modern pattern or heirloom? It's a time of plagues and lapses, rips in the ozone layer's bridal veil. One must take comfort in whatever lap one can. He wanted her to bite him lightly. She wanted to drink a quart of water and get to bed early. Now that's what I call an exciting date. In the voodoun religion, believers can marry their gods. Some nuns wed Jesus, but they have to cut off all their hair

> first. He's afraid he'll tangle in it, trip and fall. Be laid low. Get lost. Your face: lovely and rough as a gravestone. I kiss it. I do.
>
> In a more pragmatic age many brides' veils later served as their burying shrouds. After they'd paid their dues to mother nature, they commanded last respects. Wreaths, incense, and satin in crypts. In India, marriage of children is common. An army of those who died young marches through your studio this afternoon to rebuke you for closing your eyes to the fullness of the world. But when they get close enough to read what's written on your forehead, they realize you only did what was necessary. They hurriedly skip outside to bless your car, your mangy lawn, and the silver floss tree which bows down in your front yard.
>
> His waiting room is full of pious heathens and the pastor calls them into his office for counseling, two by two, Once you caressed me in a restaurant by poking me with a fork. In those days, any embrace was a strain. In the picture in this encyclopedia, the oriental bride's headdress looks like a paper boat. The caption says: "Marriage in Japan is a formal, solemn ceremony." O bride, fed and bedded down on a sea of Dexatrim, tea, rice, and quinine, can you guide me? Is the current swift? Is there a bridge? What does this old fraction add up to: you over me? Mr. Numerator on top of Miss Denominator? The two of us divided by a line from a psalm, a differing line of thinking, the thin bloodless line of your lips pressed together. At the end of the service, guests often toss rice or old shoes. You had a close shave, handsome. Almost knocked unconscious by a flying army boot, while your friends continued to converse nonchalantly under a canopy of mosquito netting. You never recognized me darling, but I knew you right away. I know my fate when I see it. But it's bad luck to lay eyes on each other before the appropriate moment. So look away. Even from this distance, and the chasm is widening (the room grows huge), I kiss your old and new wounds. I kiss you. I do. (*Bitter Angel* 62–63)

Because it evokes the wedding ceremony, the text rather appropriately focuses on "utensils"—a common wedding gift, symbolizing the bodily sharing and mutual identifications of marriage: "Romance is a world, tiny and curved, reflected in a spoon." A website called *Love Lore and*

Legends explains that spoons have been "used as love tokens through the ages, perhaps because they nestle together so closely" (4), and another site selling dinner spoons claims that "romance is reflected" in their design (*Onlinesterling*), but in Gerstler's prose poem, the lovers do not simply become *like* nestled spoons or find their romantic feelings mirrored in them, they threaten to *become* utensils themselves: "The plight of desire, a longing to consort, to dally, bend over, lose yourself . . . be rubbed till you're shiny as a new minted utensil. A monogrammed butterknife, modern pattern or heirloom?" And later, the speaker tells her lover, in an image recalling the hostile gender relations of "White Marriage" and "The True Bride": "Once you caressed me in a restaurant by poking me with a fork." Playing what Michel Delville calls "flamboyant textual games" (246), Gerstler discursively suspends her spoons, knives, and forks between the overdetermined language of love lore and Stein's liberation of the signifier. Stein, like Gerstler, envisions a central, almost magical role for shiny utensils in the "expression of marrying" ("Long Gay Book" 239). A couple in "lovely love" fit and reflect each other like spoons: "Please the spoons, the ones that are silver and have sugar and do not make mischief later, do not ever say more than listening can explain." But like Gerstler's utensils, Stein's can also turn threatening: "The sudden spoon is the wound in the decision" (*Tender Buttons* 471). In *Tender Buttons* the utensils and other homely objects introduce a surfeit of appealing dishes and meals. Gerstler's drama of utensils, however, leads to her usual fascination with cannibalism and starvation. Slipping unpredictably into third-person discourse, the narrator states that "He wanted her to bite him lightly." Later she equally mysteriously invokes a Dantesque guide or a postmodern muse on a diet: "O bride, fed and bedded down on a sea of Dexatrim, tea, rice, and quinine, can you guide me?"

The speaker of "Marriage," reflecting the earlier two prose poems, expresses skepticism about the power differential inherent in patriarchal marriage. She does so through a characteristically witty trope, playing on memories of both math class and Disneyfied efforts to make math, if not marriage, palatable: "What does this old fraction add up to: you over me? Mr. Numerator on top of Miss Denominator?" She associates such marriage with environmental disaster: "rips" in the bridal veil resemble holes in the ozone layer. And like the earlier poems, "Marriage" connects the wedded state with the wife's injury or death—"brides' veils" with "burying shrouds," the groom's face with "a gravestone." The speaker's studio is invaded by an army of women "who died young," condemning and then forgiving her.

If "Marriage" associates the wedding with "fate," it also displays a qualified optimism not present in the more deterministic marriage poems that precede it. In contrast to the earlier poems, this one evokes a marriage predicated on an element of choice. "Why begin?" the speaker asks herself. And answers: "Lots of reasons." This bride is not the desperate innocent of "White Marriage" nor the helpless invalid of "The True Bride" but a conscious and self-assertive actor. She knows the traditional story of marriage—in romance, fairy tale, and commerce as well as in death-in-life reality. Even with such knowledge, she finds dark humor in the situation. To explain the fear of female sexuality in Christianity, the speaker goes for the joke: "Some nuns marry Jesus, but they have to cut off all their hair first. He's afraid he'll tangle in it, trip and fall." She again resorts to slapstick in the image of the bridegroom being "almost knocked unconscious by a flying army boot."

Like the heroine of Grimm's "True Bride," the narrator in "Marriage" gives her groom kisses that mark, awaken, and heal him, and that bind him to her. The number of kisses is three, the magic number in fairy tales: "I kiss" your face, "I kiss your old and new wounds," "I kiss you." Although she is not the sleeping princess in this tale, he is very nearly the groom in Grimm's "True Bride," who has been made unconscious of his true bride and unable to recognize her until awakened by her kiss. As Gerstler puts it, he "never recognized" her, but she "knew [him] right away. I know my fate when I see it." Perhaps, as she says in a poem named after the old Patsy Cline song "I Fall to Pieces," lovers only kiss to keep each other from biting (*True Bride* 17). But perhaps there is also a sexual involvement implied here, very different from the "NO KISSING" rule of "White Marriage," and a mutuality very different from the sadomasochism of "The True Bride." "Marriage" ends with a contradictory mix of connections and detachments. As "the chasm is widening," the speaker nonetheless says, "I kiss you. I do." We might read this final assertion as either the poem's last ironization of the marriage vows or as a repetition and affirmation of them.

§

In images and sentences that speak to each other at odd angles, and in common cultural motifs set awry, Gerstler's texts evoke pairings that are inimical, furious, doomed, or ambiguous. They provide a discontinuous, disenchanted discourse of marriage, one haunted by earlier narratives, by congeries of dislike, unmet needs, and refusals to let go—and in "Marriage," by disbelief balanced against hope. These poems explore the rasping tensions, ever liable to explode into violence, that may lie sedimented in our most intimate human relations.

Note

1. Amy Gerstler (1956–present), a Los Angeles poet and text–artwork creator, is the author of eight books of poetry, which include both prose poems and conventionally lineated poems. Two of her volumes, *Bitter Angel* (1990) and *Medicine* (2000), have received National Book Critics' Circle awards for poetry. Gerstler has taught at Bennington College, Art Center College of Design (Pasadena), UCLA, UC Irvine, Antioch University (Los Angeles), and the Otis Art Institute, and she has read her poetry at universities and art museums across the nation. Although her work is represented in Paul Hoover's influential anthology *Postmodern American Poetry* (605–09), it has received surprisingly little critical attention thus far. One exception to this rule is an excellent reference article by Amy Moorman Robbins in *Contemporary American Women Poets.* Others are the canny comments offered by Michel Delville (246, 259), Sven Birkerts (177–78), Laurence Goldstein (725–30), and David Shapiro.

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Distancing the Proximate Other: Hybridity and Maud Diver's *Candles in the Wind*

Loretta M. Mijares

> The half-caste out here falls between two stools, that's the truth.
> —Maud Diver, *Candles in the Wind* (45)

Miscegenation has long been recognized as one of the recurrent tropes of colonial discourse, and recent work has convincingly demonstrated that it was often enlisted in efforts to justify more authoritarian colonial rule. Critics such as Nancy Paxton and Jenny Sharpe have drawn attention to the ubiquitous theme of interracial romance and marriage in domestic fiction written by the British in India, a body of literature previously relegated to the genre of romance and dismissed as what Margaret Stieg calls "sub-literature" (3). While critics have begun to recognize that the focus of this large body of fiction on domestic arrangements expresses anxiety about interracial liaisons and miscegenation, few pay adequate attention either to the historical reality of the Eurasian community in existence during the periods they analyze or to the Eurasian characters in these works of fiction and their particular ideological function. The tendency of literary critics discussing miscegenation to categorize Eurasians and "natives" as equal threats in the domestic sphere is itself evidence of the success of this body of fiction's strategic response to historical Eurasians: the disconcertingly familiar Eurasian is converted in fiction from *proximate other* to *distant other,* thereby relocating the anxiety generated by both the uncanniness of the Eurasian and the material threat this population posed to smooth colonial rule.[1]

A deeper and more historically nuanced investigation into the Eurasian as trope and as historical reality in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century offers opportunities to expand our understanding not only of the dynamics of colonial discourse but also of our current conceptions of hybridity. Maud Diver's *Candles in the Wind* is representative of a body of colonial fiction that constructs its images of Eurasians as being in between Indian and British culture, negating in the process the possibility of their existence as Anglo-Indian.[2] The representational strategies this body of fiction deploys in depicting Eurasians can be seen as a refusal to allow the history of the Anglo-Indian community into the official colonial narrative. Undertaking a literary analysis that examines fictional representations of Eurasians in light of the silenced history of actual experience demonstrates that hybridity is a constructed category. Furthermore, the construction of this category occurs unevenly within specific historical contexts, and its imposition on a body of people, often not by the choice of those so described, can attest to the entrenched nature of power rather than to the fluidity of identity.

Eurasians in colonial India

As with the Portuguese, Dutch, and French before them, early British colonizers commonly maintained sexual relationships with Indian women.[3] These arrangements, both informal (concubinage) and formal (marriage), were well known to colonial administrators and often officially encouraged. Anglo-Indian historian Herbert Stark, in documenting the incentives the East India Company offered to British soldiers in the late seventeenth century to encourage intermarriage, argues that the motivation behind this encouragement was only secondarily an interest in propagating Christianity in the colonies:

> The authorities of the East India Company were not slow to recognize and appreciate the advantages to the company from the alliances formed by their servants with the Indian women. The children grew up in attachment to, and in dependence upon, the nation of their fathers. Their mothers having been cast out by their Indian relatives, the children formed the beginnings of a new race standing in detachment from the people of the soil, and separated from them by speech, religion, dress, customs and habits—by those fundamentals which go to constitute nationality. (*Hostages* 30)

As with Thomas Macaulay's program of anglicization, proclaimed in his infamous "Minute on Indian Education" (1835), the reasons for favoring intermarriage, Stark argues, were firmly grounded in the material business of colonization: the loyalty of Eurasians to the British, in combination with their knowledge of Indian ways, conditions, and markets, made them "an invaluable asset to those whose chief concern was with the wealth to be derived from a lucrative trade" (30–31). Stark's unambiguous account reminds us that while the Eurasian community was often depicted as the outcome of the unpoliced and regrettable sexual licentiousness of British soldiers, early colonial administrators both benefited from and often encouraged these liaisons.[4]

Anglo-Indian historians characterize the period before the close of the eighteenth century as one of prosperity for Eurasians. Many held intermediate positions in the civil and military government. Fair-skinned Eurasian children of British men of means were often sent "Home" to England to be educated. Schools offering Westernized education were also established in India by the East India Company for poorer Eurasian children. By the 1770s, however, the Eurasians in India came to outnumber the British; awareness of this fact coincided with several "native" antigovernment "mutinies" in the colonies and the mulatto revolution in Haiti. Growing British anxiety about the role of the Eurasian in India was succinctly expressed by a writer in the *Calcutta Chronicle* in 1792: "If forthwith drastic measures are not put into operation to keep down the East Indian [Eurasian] race, they will do to the British in India what the Mulattoes have done to the Spaniards in San Domingo" (qtd. in Stark, *John Ricketts* 18–19). These colonial apprehensions brought an end to the period of prosperity for Anglo-Indians.

At the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, in response to questions about the loyalties of Eurasians and Malthusian anxieties about their growing numbers—and in the context of the Britons' own efforts to consolidate their power against rival European forces and unyielding Indians—the East India Company imposed a number of restrictive regulations intended to curb the reach of the Eurasian into the social and governmental ranks of British rule. In 1786 an order was issued disallowing students of the Upper Orphanage School at Calcutta, comprised primarily of Eurasians, to journey to England for their education (Stark, *Hostages* 55).[5] Orders issued in 1791 and 1795 prohibited Eurasians from commissioned service in the army, except as drummers, fifers, and farriers (Stark, *Hostages* 55). The government reversed its position on the appropriateness of "country-borns" serving in the military, however, whenever there was a need to bolster British ranks.[6] Eurasians were ordered to return to the ranks whenever England could not meet its military needs in both Europe and India, and were dismissed again when their presence became inconvenient. As Stark observes, Eurasians "were British or Indian as the occasion advised. In any case they suffered the disabilities imposed on both, but never enjoyed the privileges of either" (*Hostages* 101). This legal in-betweenness had a profound effect on the ability of the Eurasian community to prosper, a fact that must not be forgotten when we investigate how it is transformed in literature into cultural in-betweenness.

In order to mitigate the oppressive measures levied against them, the mixed-race community in India strove to demonstrate that they were not a threat to colonial rule, in part by attempting to express, in their adoption of the appellation Anglo-Indian, their genealogical link with Britain and their loyalty as British subjects. Their efforts to defend their filial claims throughout the nineteenth century met with mixed results. The years after the 1833 Charter Act saw Anglo-Indians again serving in military and civil posts, especially in the rapidly expanding railway, telegraph, and postal services, where they had a notable presence. During the 1857 Mutiny, Anglo-Indians remained loyal to the British. This was the same period, however, during which social views regarding race and interracial marriage became more rigid. Previously, it was not uncommon for British men to marry Anglo-Indian women, as there were few unmarried British women in India. However, when greater numbers of British women began arriving in India in the wake of relaxed marriage restrictions in the 1833 Charter Act and the opening of the Suez Canal, and thus a quicker journey from England to India, these intermarriages soon become socially and officially frowned upon.[7] Furthermore, Anglo-Indians continued to suffer as a result of the ambiguity regarding their legal and administrative status. Issues involving the legitimacy of marriage, inheritance, and legal redress were left undefined: while Hindus, Muslims, and the British each had codified systems of law recognized by the colonial government for the resolution of these issues, Anglo-Indians were in a legally marginal position, defined and redefined according to the self-interests of the British administration.

In 1919, in response to Indian demands for a greater share in colonial administration, the Government of India Act (the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms) opened to competition jobs previously reserved for Anglo-Indians. While "Indianization" was intended to create the impression of a more egalitarian sharing of power between colonizer and colonized, Anglo-Indian historians argue that it was to the detriment of those in the middle that these measures were implemented: "Indianization' can be taken to mean mere de-Anglo-Indianizing. For an Anglo-Indian to lose his position to make way for another Indian is often considered 'Indianization'" (Maher 33). Once again, the position of being in between the colonizer and the colonized eroded the security of Anglo-Indians' livelihoods. The growing independence movement complicated the Anglo-Indian community's struggle for recognition; whereas concessions were previously sought from the British rulers, the increasing strength of Indian nationalists required conciliation of yet another influential force.

As the movement toward self-rule continued, Anglo-Indians found their position to be no clearer than under exclusive British rule. In 1925, the Secretary of State for India provided the following definition to the British Parliament:

> For purposes of employment under Government and inclusion in schemes of Indianization, members of the Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European Community are Statutory Natives of India. For purposes of education and internal security, their status, in so far as it admits to definition, approximates that of European British subjects. (qtd. in Gist and Wright 17)

The ambiguity of this schema saliently demonstrates the legislative in-betweenness of the Anglo-Indian, whose status, "in so far as it admits to definition," is only an approximation of European British subjectivity. This definition aimed to reduce the number of actual Indians appointed to service by including them with Anglo-Indians and Domiciled Europeans.[8] At the same time, however, the definition not only acknowledged some cultural affinity between Anglo-Indians and the British in the specification for European education, but it also assumed Anglo-Indians' political loyalty to the British in issues of "internal security": when Indians began to foment against the British in India, the Anglo-Indians would once again be expected to close ranks against the "natives."

This position of loyalty became increasingly precarious as it became obvious that British control of India was coming to a close. Faced with the imminent departure of those they looked to for patronage, Anglo-Indians were compelled to invent new positions for themselves in the emerging nation-state. Anglo-Indian leaders stridently lobbied the departing British for constitutional protections. In the 1947 Constitution of India, the first constitution of independent India, Anglo-Indians were guaranteed political representation and support for English education, and were reserved posts in the railway, customs, postal, and telegraph services. While they were the only minority group to receive these protections, the constitution also structured a gradual reduction of these reserved posts by 10 percent every two years, and in 10 years all such reservations would be eliminated.[9] Anglo-Indian lobbyists also worked determinedly to have English included as one of the official languages of the new nation, insisting that it was the first and only language of a portion of India's citizens. Indeed, command of the English language as a mother tongue was held dear by many Anglo-Indians as the central defining trait of membership in the Anglo-Indian community.

After independence, circumstances in India continued to threaten the viability of Anglo-Indians as a coherent community. Many Anglo-Indians with means immigrated to England, Canada, and Australia when the British withdrew. Because of this emigration, and because those who were able to "pass" as British were absorbed into the European community in India, the visible remaining Anglo-Indian community was more impoverished and disadvantaged. The protections guaranteed to the Anglo-Indian community in the 1947 Constitution of India were no longer in effect after a decade, at the same time that Indian education was rapidly expanding, so that Anglo-Indians found themselves in intensified competition with better-qualified candidates for posts traditionally reserved for Anglo-Indians. In 1961, Anglo-Indian as a distinct category was dropped from the national census, undoing the hard-fought concession Anglo-Indian lobbyists had finally won to have the mixed-race population identified as Anglo-Indian for the 1911 and subsequent censuses.[10] The 1965 displacement of English by Hindi as the national language of India prompted another wave of Anglo-Indian emigration, and the current movement by Hindu nationalists to rout "foreign" elements out of India continues to threaten the security of this indigenous minority.

And yet, Anglo-Indians remain a distinct, albeit comparatively small, minority in contemporary India.[11] While the issues surrounding ethnic identification in processes such as censuses make numerical estimation difficult, there are in the order of 100,000–300,000 Anglo-Indians currently in India (Gist and Wright 3).[12] They continue to be identified as mixed-race individuals who identify English as their mother tongue and Christianity as their religion, with Westernized ways of dress, personal habits, and social conduct. While Anglo-Indians are admittedly an infinitesimal fraction of the population of 1 billion in contemporary India, the hybridity embodied in the historically constructed Eurasian remains a recurrent and ubiquitous trope in the fiction of India.[13]

Literary criticism and racial mixture

Most literary criticism analyzing interracial marriages in colonial India discusses the problems of transgressing established racial boundaries, and in so doing it generally classes Eurasians and Indians together as equal threats. In *Writing under the Raj* Nancy Paxton focuses on the ubiquitous theme of rape in post-1857 British Indian fiction as the site around which anxieties about miscegenation cluster. Both Paxton and Jenny Sharpe usefully demonstrate how the rape of an Englishwoman by an Indian man was one of the mobilizing tropes to emerge out of the 1857 Mutiny and was used as the justification for the greater martial and economic control characteristic of what Paxton calls the "New Imperialism" (194). While Paxton astutely points out that this "rape script" (3) replaced Edmund Burke's earlier script of Britain's rape of India in the rhetoric of official colonial discourse, she overlooks the longevity and outcome of the actual sexual encounters underlying that earlier script—the common practices of concubinage, prostitution, and interracial marriage—that produced the Anglo-Indian community.[14] Paxton's focus is on the transgressive sex act itself, on the significance of representations of Britons and Indians having sexual relations, and on how the threat of miscegenation affects the reception of these relations. But she ends her story there, stopping short of asking what the actual physical presence of Eurasians signifies in the colonial novels and in the historical real.[15]

Despite this shortcoming, Paxton's work is valuable in its reassessment of colonial domestic fiction, a genre previously dismissed by critics as mere lightweight popular romance dealing "with Love, with a capital letter" that "guarantees its reader a happy ending" (Stieg 3).[16] Alison Sainsbury also offers a useful interrogation of previous critical assumptions about this genre. In her more nuanced analysis of the complexities of what she terms the Anglo-Indian domestic novel, she concludes that discourses of domesticity themselves do important and complex ideological work in the business of negotiating imperial identities. She argues that women's Anglo-Indian domestic fiction challenges the writing of Anglo-India by British men (most notably Kipling and Forster), in which women are seen primarily as anathema to the project of empire building, by asserting that in maintaining the domestic sphere women are playing their roles in the public sphere precisely by fostering and defending the growth of the empire. The Anglo-Indian domestic novel, argues Sainsbury, "reinvents the place of the private, domestic establishment in the public, political sphere, an enterprise that concomitantly reconstitutes an Englishwoman's subjectivity in relation to both" (168). According to Sainsbury, women's domestic fiction of India rewrites the theme of rape prevalent in men's fiction in terms that allow for greater female agency: "the overpowering of Englishwomen by Indian men—rape—is matched by Englishwomen's power to choose" (170). This power to choose is offered through scenarios of rape or interracial romance, whereby the sexual threats of interracial romance "function as tests of imperial citizenship" (171). By exerting her power to refuse to succumb to these temptations, the Englishwoman demonstrates her awareness of her duty as a citizen of the empire through vigilant protection of the racial purity of the domestic sphere, and is duly rewarded by marriage to a brave Englishman loyal to empire.

While Sainsbury's analysis offers important interventions into our understanding of the work that these texts perform, like Paxton and Sharpe she sees that work primarily in gender terms and thus elides the distinction between Indians and Eurasians—both are equal threats testing the potential woman citizen.[17] While this may seem to be true in reading the novels, I will argue that this equation of the Eurasian with the "native" is precisely evidence of the ideological work this literature performs: the relocation of the Eurasian from proximate other to distant other. For the unique problem of the Eurasian is that the crossing of the racial boundary is a fait accompli. The "half-caste" is the embodied reminder of the fallacy of Kipling's endlessly repeated truism, "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet."[18] The perceived threat of the half-caste is not simply that he is both other and self but further that he possesses at times a dangerous invisibility; he can "pass" as British, demonstrating the permeability of racial boundaries constructed by the British as indissoluble in order to justify colonial rule.[19] Through his invisibility, his capacity to "pass," he reveals himself as the proximate other rather than the absolutely other, a proximity all the more disconcerting in light of British anxieties about their own capacity for hybridization in the colonial context.[20] Writers committed to promoting the advance of imperialism thus must work to construct difference between the Briton and the Eurasian, to make the invisible visible: in so doing, they reveal the anxieties generated by both the uncanniness of the Eurasian and the material threat this population posed.

Homi Bhabha's notion of colonial hybridity illuminates literary responses to the uncanniness of the Eurasian. In *The Location of Culture* Bhabha defines *colonial hybridity* as "the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire" (112).[21] Colonial hybridity is, for Bhabha, the process of colonial disavowal in which the unknowable and unrecognizable other is displaced through the construction of a knowable other fashioned in the colonizer's own image. The identity of that knowable other is based on difference—the inferior, degraded, "bastard" child that secures the "pure" and original identity of colonial authority and its right to rule. What is useful in Bhabha's formulation of colonial hybridity is the keen description of the processes of ambivalence and disavowal intrinsic to colonial discourse; application of this concept to literary Eurasians helps to identify the ideological work being done in this body of fiction. It is, however, the process rather than the term *colonial hybridity* that is useful. Indeed, using the analytic tool named colonial hybridity to expose the constructedness of hybridity as a trope in colonial discourse leads me to question the appropriateness of hybridity as a critical concept in postcolonial theory. For the process Bhabha calls colonial hybridization is precisely the mechanism that produces the in-betweenness of the Eurasian, an in-betweenness that is neither liberating nor an accurate reflection of Anglo-Indian experience.

In colonial fiction, the similarity of the Christian, English-speaking Eurasian to the Briton must be disavowed through his reconstruction as dissimilar—and yet, that dissimilarity is not the absolute unknowable otherness that would be required to acknowledge an independent Anglo-Indian community. Rather, it is the in-betweenness of the bastard child, denied full membership in either community it is ostensibly caught between. Similarities remaining within that constructed space of in-betweenness are further contained through such strategies as the racialization of Eurasians, pushing them further toward the "native" territory of no-man's-land, and their metaphorizations into symbols for something else, such as the possibility or impossibility of harmony between the two nations of India and Britain.

In "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers," her astute anthropological investigation into *métissage* (racial hybridity) in Dutch and French colonies in Southeast Asia, Ann Stoler argues that the danger of the half-caste lies in the upset of the divide between colonizer and colonized:

> Recast, these discourses [of degeneration, mental instability, etc.] may be more about the fear of empowerment, not about marginality at all; about groups that straddled and disrupted cleanly marked social divides and whose diverse membership exposed the arbitrary logic by which the categories of control were made. . . . Métissage . . . was so heavily politicized because it threatened both to destabilize national identity, and the Manichean categories of ruler and ruled. (549)

While the threat the métis poses to "categories of control" is undoubtedly important, what is most pertinent to the current discussion is Stoler's keen observation that the rhetoric through which racial intermixture is represented "may be more about the fear of empowerment, not about marginality at all." By the mid-nineteenth century, Eurasians had begun to organize themselves as a community based on their identification of themselves as mixed race, yet at the same time closely affiliated with the British. The complexity of this history of differentiation and association is reflected in the ambiguously named organizations founded in the last quarter of the century, such as the "Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association" of Bengal and the "Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European Association of Southern India."[22] In 1911, just two years after the publication of Diver's *Candles in the Wind*, the mixed-race community finally won its battle to be officially recognized as Anglo-Indian by the British government, after several earlier rebuffs. Diver clearly was not only aware of but also disgusted with this development: in *The Singer Passes,* the third novel of the series begun with *Lilámani,* she describes this decision as the "official blunder of bestowing on Eurasians a name indissolubly linked with the English in India," a blunder which in her estimation "had in no way lessened the natural prejudices of both races" (60). At the same time, then, that the Eurasian community was both actively struggling to lay claim to the terms with which to define itself and demanding material benefits from the British by virtue of its assumed genealogical link, many British in India were as stridently denying both the shared appellation and the social and economic responsibilities implied therein. The colonial constructions of a particular kind of in-betweenness for the Eurasian is part of that denial.

Candles in the Wind: Constructing no-man's-land

Between 1908 and her death in 1945, Maud Diver wrote almost 30 novels and nonfiction works dealing primarily with Indian themes and historical figures. She is probably most remembered for her 1909 nonfictional work *The Englishwoman in India*—a heartfelt and yet ambivalent defense against the Kiplingesque images of British women in India as indolent and frivolous. She also wrote several novels with mixed-race protagonists. *Candles in the Wind* (1909) recounts a story of an Englishwoman married to a Eurasian, and the Sinclair series (1911–38) follows the development of the son of an English nobleman and a Rajput princess.[23] I will focus here on *Candles in the Wind,* as it provides the clearest example of colonial constructions of hybridity. In this novel, miscegenation is already an accomplished fact as well as a continuing threat. The novel's task is to contain the subversiveness already set in motion by the Eurasian characters and to forestall future subversion; the strategies it deploys to accomplish this depend essentially on transforming its Eurasian character into something else, thereby erasing the material threats that Eurasians pose, by their very existence, to colonial administration. In showing the disastrous results of marriage between an Englishwoman and a Eurasian, *Candles in the Wind* offers what appears to be an unsurprising object lesson in the dangers of interracial marriage, rehearsing a common theme of British literature of India. And yet, the use of this familiar warning disguises the fact that miscegenation has already taken place and is lurking unseen in British society. The Eurasians' potential ability to "pass" as British requires ideological work to be performed to prove their difference in order to justify their exclusion from the British community. This work is done not simply to keep the boundaries of British society in India well defined; it is also necessary to bolster the British position in the face of material demands placed on the colonial administration by the Eurasian community.

The central character of *Candles in the Wind*, Alan Laurence, is a quintessential builder of empire: an engineer devoted to forging roads and bridges through the frontiers of India's borders so that the march of empire can continue unimpeded. The story is launched as Laurence falls instantly in love with the beautiful and other-worldly Lyndsay Videlle before realizing that she is married. Worse yet, she is married to a doctor who she does not know is half-caste. The plot of the novel is predictable: the repulsive and pitiable Eurasian, obstacle to true love and happiness, must die so that the virtuous Englishwoman and the virile empire builder can unite in a happy ending. The plot and the narrator's commentary on the characters leave no doubt as to how the reader is meant to judge them. Lyndsay's husband, Jim Videlle, is not only unworthy of the sacrifice of Lyndsay's commitment to him, his cowardice and weakness prove him undeserving of life itself. The perfect compatibility between Lyndsay and Laurence, on the other hand, becomes not only a paragon of "true marriage" but also an exemplar of proper performances of manhood and womanhood as integral parts of the British empire. What is less obvious, however, is the means by which the threat of invisibility posed by the Eurasian character, demonstrated by his marriage to Lyndsay, is recontained by his transformation from proximate other to distant other through manipulations of discourses of race, class, and religion.

In the first conversation between Laurence and Lyndsay, we have the novel's thesis regarding half-castes and, in effect, a précis of the plot that will unfold to illustrate this thesis. The newly married Lyndsay, just arrived in India, admits to her new acquaintance, "Of course I'm abysmally ignorant—you've discovered that already! But I want to know exactly what people mean by a half-caste; and why the word so often goes with a tone of contempt?" (45). She asks Laurence, a stranger to her, this question because she has begun to have misgivings about her husband but is afraid to reveal them to anyone she already knows. The novel sets out to answer her question by demonstrating to Lyndsay and the reader that the general contempt held for half-castes is based on an undeniable truth, as revealed by Jim's actions. The initial intuitive repugnance that Lyndsay feels at the idea of racial mixture is ratified by her empirical experience.

Laurence's reply to Lyndsay's question announces more fully the paradigm through which Jim Videlle's moral failure is to be understood:

> "the half-caste out here falls between two stools, that's the truth. He has the misfortune to be neither white nor brown; and he is generally perverse enough to pick the worst qualities of the

> two races, and mix them into a product peculiarly distasteful to both. . . . Seems hard luck on the poor devils; but they really are a most unsatisfactory crew on the whole. Clever enough, some of 'em: but there's a want of grit in their constitutions, physical and moral. It's a bad business all round, the mixing of brown and white races in marriage." (45)[24]

Each of these statements is borne out as the character of Jim Videlle unfolds, on the one hand proving Laurence's sagacity about issues of race in colonial India and on the other showing that the individual Eurasian inevitably aligns with the characterization of the group as a whole, thus proving the nature of all half-castes. When Laurence later mentions the specific case of Videlle (unaware that he is speaking to Videlle's wife), he describes him as "a clever fellow. Quite one of the better kind" (46), echoing his own earlier description of some half-castes as "clever enough." And yet, Videlle's obvious intelligence and dedication as a "keen and capable" (107) doctor are later outweighed by his vacillations between adoration and bitter distrust in his treatment of his wife, and by his weakness in succumbing to disease—proving once again that while he may well be "one of the better kind," he nonetheless displays the same "want of grit" in his constitution as the rest of the "unsatisfactory crew."

In the descriptive image of the half-caste as falling "between two stools," we clearly see the colonial construction of in-betweenness. The third space here created for the Eurasian to occupy is not akin to Bhabha's "Third Space" (36), a space assumed to enable a fluid movement destabilizing the fixed identities of the two stools, but rather is itself a location fixed not only in discourse but also in the social and cultural realm shaped by that discourse. It is a state of negation, "*neither* white nor brown." The trope of the half-caste as the combination of the worst of both races, standard in British Indian literature, is methodically illustrated: Jim displays on the one hand traits explicitly identified as "Asiatic" or "Hindu"—"melancholy, aloofness" (52); "sensuous indecision" (66); "instability, physical and moral" (79)—and on the other the stereotypically (lower-class) British vices, gambling and drink ("the lure of card-table and whisky bottle" [269]). Videlle's fall into moral decay is facilitated by his frequent "'peg,' too stiff for a midday nip," described as the legacy of "his Scotch father [who] did him an ill turn here" (84).[25] As the novel constructs him, Jim Videlle indeed is marked by the combination of "the worst qualities of the two races." And of course, the disastrous results of Lyndsay and Videlle's marriage lend credence to Laurence's platitude that "it's a bad business all round, the mixing of brown and white races in marriage." Thus the personal history and socioeconomic forces shaping the half-caste's life are here erased through their transformation into inevitable genetic character traits, a transformation made possible by an essentialist notion of racial hybridity. While the process that Bhabha calls colonial hybridization needs to reconstruct a knowable other based on acceptable difference, the result in the case of the Eurasian is itself a model of hybridity that limits identity to a fixed binaristic formula defined primarily through negation.

The peculiarities in Laurence's rhetoric in this passage further reveal the ideological work being done here. Half-castes are granted a strange agency in the construction "he is generally perverse enough to *pick* the worst qualities of the two races." The half-caste is somehow accredited with the power to choose the inherent qualities of his own make-up, and thus he can be condemned for choosing poorly. This catch-22 enables colonial discourse to relocate guilt by blaming the Eurasian for his own plight. The anxiety motivating this construction is suggested by the opinion that the result of perverse racial mixing is "a product peculiarly distasteful to both." While the fantastic attribution of agency implies an intention to annoy both races, the admission that the mixture is *peculiarly* distasteful suggests that this product is distasteful to the exact degree that the race making this declaration is forced to recognize itself, translated into an entity that it cannot acknowledge while maintaining its own codes of race and power. This convoluted rhetoric of relocated agency and blame enables a disavowal not only of responsibility to the entity fathered by the colonizer but also of similitude between father and bastard child.

After Laurence delivers this overview of the Eurasian's character, Lyndsay gives "a small fastidious shiver of disgust" and muses:

> "I didn't know—that kind of thing happened nowadays. And I can't imagine how any man with English ideals and English blood in his veins could wish to marry the sort of woman one sees about here." (45)

I will return to the irony of this utterance emerging from an Englishwoman married to a Eurasian in a moment. For the present, let us examine Laurence's reply. After assuring her "no more can I," he explains that while it is very uncommon nowadays, "in the Mutiny days, or earlier, when men were stuck out here for half their service, it was another matter." He offers the following justification for this phenomenon:

> "One can't blame them. It is not good for man to be alone. But their descendants have had to pay heavily for that simple fact. It's not race prejudice that puts one off. Personally, I like Asiatics. I've found fine fellows among them—Hindu and Mohammedan. It's the fatality of mixing such mighty opposites in marriage; and the white man's distaste for the half-breed all the world over." (45)

Despite the authorizing weight that the novel's own plot structure grants to Laurence's statements, the anxieties and contradictions inherent in this colonial discourse are revealed in the rhetoric itself. Immediately, when Laurence claims "one can't blame" these earlier Europeans who decided to mate with Indian women, "one" is forced to ask: who, then, are we to blame? The answer suggested earlier by Laurence's own account of the Eurasian's flaws is that we are to blame the descendants of these men, for being "perverse enough to pick the worst qualities of the two races." The Biblical echo in the declaration "it is not good for man to be alone" seems to legitimize these couplings, resulting in a strange paradox: Laurence acknowledges the naturalness of desire, but simultaneously condemns the fruit of that desire. He states as a universal law the "fatality of mixing such mighty opposites" but does not denounce the Englishmen who violated that law. They are exonerated by virtue of the "simple fact" of their desire. The paradox of admitting desire for the racial other while asserting repulsion at racial intermixture is what then produces "the white man's distaste for the half-breed all the world over." These illogical paradoxes, here signaled by the peculiarity of "distaste," are almost always evidence of the colonial hybrid as defined by Bhabha: "the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire."[26]

Nancy Paxton argues that at least as early as Edmund Burke's attempt to impeach Warren Hastings at the end of the eighteenth century, the original "rape script" of colonial discourse in India was that of Britain's rape of Indian women. In the first half of the nineteenth century, as the British were trying to legislate and repress "native" practices such as sati and thuggery, British literature often depicted Indian women being raped by Indian men in order to justify British intervention into Indian practices. It was not until after the 1857 uprising that the rape narrative familiar today, that of an Indian man raping a British woman, emerged, again as part of an effort to authorize the perceived need for greater marshal and economic control of the unruly "natives."[27] These various narratives about rape, Paxton argues, "are related to the changing global and economic contexts that produced them" (21).

Paxton convincingly demonstrates how in the aftermath of the 1857 uprising, the flood of mutiny novels did "ideological double duty" as

> they attempted to reconcile contradictions in at least two conflicting ideologies about "race" in British defenses of empire in the postmutiny period: one that asserted the racial superiority of British men and women in India, and the other that insisted on the necessity of male domination in both the public and private spheres, which by definition included Indian as well as English men. (111)

Paxton argues that the "rape script" of Englishwomen raped by Indian men reconciles these contradictions by asserting the moral superiority of the British over the lawlessness of Indian men while at the same time demonstrating the natural weakness of British women assigned to the role of "agency-less victims" (111). By the turn of the century, however, changes in the social and sexual contract, marked by such events as the 1882 Married Woman's Property Act, strained the policing of gender and desire in India. This is reflected in the emergence of romances, written mostly by women, willing to depict love and marriage across racial boundaries. Most of these stories figure English men falling in love with Indian women; less common are novels that depict English women falling in love with and marrying Indian men. These novels

> are far more challenging to the colonial hierarchies of race, class and gender . . . and also less likely to conclude with pat and easy re-endorsements of colonial ideologies that enforced the racial and gender subordination defining social life in India. (194)

Paxton suggests that "what made these cross-racial romances possible and, at the same time, intensified the crisis in the sexual imaginary was the emergence of the New Woman as a popular figure in romances of the 1890s" (195). The New Woman was sexually liberated, educated, and willing and able to demand a greater share of participation in the pub-

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lic sphere. In the context of British India, the New Woman was seen as posing a serious threat to colonial rule. In Paxton's analysis of interracial marriages in British novels, it was usually a New Woman, often a doctor, teacher, or governess, who dared to "passionately love Indian men" (198). Yet, while these transgressive acts violated and redefined codes of gender and desire, the authors of these novels generally still supported the cause of the raj. These marriages therefore seldom ended happily, ultimately preserving the "stable, mutually exclusive categories" (194) of race and gender upon which colonial rule was defined.

Paxton's analysis provides a framework for examining Lyndsay's marriage in *Candles in the Wind*. In Diver's novel, however, the emergence of the New Woman is registered through her negation. Lyndsay Videlle is most definitely *not* a New Woman, and the mystery of her marriage to Jim Videlle invokes a coercion reminiscent of earlier racialized rape themes. The novel's rejection of the New Woman and recourse to an earlier, postmutiny "rape script" maps the particular threat posed by the Eurasian onto the established trope of the dangers of transgressing racial codes. The invocation of this theme so familiar to a British Anglo-Indian audience is one strategy by which the previously invisible half-caste is rendered visible as different and inferior.

The disgust Lyndsay Videlle displays at the notion of half-castes and the idea of an Englishman marrying an Indian woman suggests her loyalty to proper colonial racial mores. These professions, however, are gravely undermined by the fact that she herself has married a Eurasian. This is indeed one of the novel's central dilemmas. If, as Alison Sainsbury has suggested, women's domestic fiction of India is distinguished from its male counterparts by a greater female agency in which sexual interracial threats "function as tests of imperial citizenship" (171), how is it that Lyndsay, depicted as intelligent and inquisitive, could fail this test and unknowingly marry a half-caste she admittedly did not love? The novel is preoccupied with addressing that question, as it layers explanation upon explanation for the disturbing contradictions between Lyndsay's virtues and her choice of husband. This preoccupation suggests an anxiety about the permeability of racial boundaries that the invisibility of the half-caste speaks to. Specific knowledge of the social customs of Anglo-Indians in the nineteenth and twentieth century enables us to identify this anxiety in the ways the novel manipulates discourses of race, class, and religion, including racialized "rape scripts," as a strategy to distance the proximate other.

As if building a defense of Lyndsay's tragic mistake, the novel takes pains to point out not only that she was constitutionally designed for marriage and motherhood, but also that her eventual acceptance of Jim's repeated proposals finally takes place after her father's death, in a period of financial insecurity and emotional vulnerability. Lyndsay's innate domesticity is staged in explicit opposition to the New Woman: "No modern woman this, blown to and fro by conflicting winds of spirit, but one framed for the creation of home and children; for the delectable companionship of true marriage,—rarest of all earthly achievements!" (62) In fact, Lyndsay is not only unlike the modern woman who neglects her domestic duties, she actually belongs to an earlier era altogether: "For all her brains, she's just an early Victorian angel, born a few decades out of time" (345). This chronological relocation of Lyndsay is part of the novel's invocation of an earlier understanding of gender in general, and in particular an earlier canon of tropes about sexual relations (and threats) in the colonial context. The death of her beloved father compounds the vulnerability of this "early Victorian angel." Thus, all these forces, "loneliness, natural instinct, and the weakness that flows upon sharp suffering" (62), are offered as explanations for Lyndsay's tragic decision to marry Jim Videlle. The implication, of course, is that had her judgment been unimpaired, she would have perceived Videlle's inferior nature and rejected his suit.

It is, however, Videlle himself who bears the greatest responsibility for this marriage. While it seems that he was unable to awaken true love in Lyndsay, he was able to present himself as reasonably charming. He is, like her adored father, a doctor. She first meets him in England, while with her father on "one of these delightfully Bohemian outings." He is described as "noticeably dark enough to suggest Southern blood," which was "rather an attraction than otherwise" (61). Thus his appearance, in a mildly transgressive yet paternally sanctioned Bohemian outing, signals some degree of racial difference, but a difference that falls within the category of safely exotic European blood. In England, then, Videlle enjoys a racial invisibility that he loses once he reaches his "native soil," pointing to the more acutely defined social structure of racial differentiation operating in the colonial context.

Most importantly, Videlle's deception and manipulation are responsible for his final victory in winning Lyndsay's hand. He successfully disguises his mixed race by telling her that his mother was a Spaniard.

And after her father's death, Videlle recognizes that Lyndsay's emotional vulnerability is to his advantage and presses his suit with renewed ardor. Videlle's cleverness in executing his web of deception and persuasion at a moment of vulnerability participates in familiar tropes about the dangers that Indian men in England pose to unsuspecting English girls.[28] Deceit was one of the most characteristic traits assigned to the "Asiatic" in the British imagination, in contrast to the Englishman's plain-dealing honesty.[29] "Cleverness" of a questionable nature (what Bhabha calls "sly civility" [93]) is another. The association of Videlle with these existing tropes of Indianness and interracial liaisons begins the process of associating him not with the ambiguity of the invisible Eurasian but with the perfidy of the Asiatic. Thus the seeming transgressiveness of a white woman desiring and voluntarily marrying a Eurasian man is contained by transforming that man into a "native" seducer; the reader is tutored to convert her censure of Lyndsay into sympathy for her victimization.

Candles in the Wind continues this process of distancing the proximate other through dubious invocations of class and religion. In Diver's later novel *Far to Seek*, the main character, Roy Sinclair, while of mixed racial origins, is not stigmatized as a half-caste because both his parents are of noble birth. In *Candles in the Wind,* however, no such option exists. "Natives" are "natives," indistinguishable from one another, and certainly "not of gentle birth" (64). As Lyndsay digests Laurence's confirmation of her "unnamed foreboding" about her husband, she reflects on "the truth that had been sprung on her":

> the truth that the mother of the man she called "husband" had been no Spaniard but a Hindu; a woman born in the smoke-grimmed squalor of a native hut; reared in an atmosphere of ignorance and superstition; just such an one, perhaps, in old age, as the very ayah who served her; a garrulous creature, yellow and wrinkled, with the red of betel-nut on lips and hands, from whose touch Lyndsay still shrank with unreasoning distaste. (64–65)

In Laurence's original account of Videlle's story, he simply told Lyndsay that Videlle's mother was "a Hindu" (46)—information gleaned in gossip with a policeman.[30] Videlle himself certainly offered no account of his mother's true origins. So where does this characterization of Videlle's supposed mother come from? The ambiguity of the narrative in the preceding pages, which alternates between Lyndsay's own unmediated thoughts and the narrator's commentary on those thoughts, is continued in this passage, serving to transform Lyndsay's repulsed imaginings into an actual portrait of Jim's mother. The stark and almost inevitable equation of "a Hindu" with "a woman born in the smoke-grimmed squalor of a native hut" suggests that "Hindu," in the cosmology of this novel, by definition means poverty, "ignorance and superstition." There is no possibility raised, by Jim or by the novel, that he could have any origins other than the "the smoke-grimmed squalor of a native hut." Class is mapped onto race here in such a way as to distance Jim from Lyndsay's social world.

This description of the repulsive Hindu mother, furthermore, erases the historical reality of Eurasians in India. Eurasians were almost always Christian, another basis for their claims to a share in British colonial society. While it can thus be assumed that Videlle would be a Christian, his religious affiliations are never mentioned in the novel.[31] This suppression, along with the portrait of a fictitious Hindu mother, can be seen once again as an attempt to resituate Jim from a position of disconcerting similarity to the more reassuringly othered grounds of "ignorance and superstition." As is noted by historians of the raj, early efforts to categorize the Indian "native" and create distinctions between colonizer and colonized were enacted on the grounds of religious difference: there were perceived clear differences between Muslims and Hindus, and both could be positioned against Christianity as the basis for exclusionary categorization. After the Mutiny of 1857, however, when Muslims and Hindus alike united against their oppressors, categories of difference began to shift notably into racial registers. Similarly, the disconcerting inability to distinguish between Christian Eurasians and the British on the basis of religion is redeemed through an appeal to the rhetoric of race. Thus, Videlle is assigned the inescapable maternal legacy of the "ignorance and superstition" of Hinduism over his paternal Christianity via an implicitly (and skewed) biological model of character formation. Without rigorous attention to the actual position of Anglo-Indians in colonial India, this strategy of racialization is easily overlooked—as is evident in most criticism of this literature, which itself proves the effectiveness of this strategy. Returning to the historical circumstances elided by the novel elucidates how the hybridity of the Eurasian in the colonial context is a constructed, racial category.

Of course, in the genre of domestic colonial fiction, the great danger posed by interracial marriage is continued miscegenation and racial degeneration. With the birth of Lyndsay's child, *Candles in the Wind* evokes this familiar danger to once again relocate the Eurasian from the uncannily familiar to the undeniably other, while at the same time advocating a return to traditional domestic roles for women. While Videlle is utterly distraught because his firstborn child is a girl (demonstrating another "Asiatic" prejudice), Lyndsay's dismay is of another order:

> Son or daughter, the child was to be her crown of marriage; and her enclosed garden of dreams had never been shadowed by the fear that had surely visited a more practical woman. Not until the hidden hope had been made manifest did she realize how completely her cup of life was poisoned by the dark drop in her husband's blood, which she had willed to thrust out of thought, even, if possible, out of memory. Hence the cruel shock, followed by hours of numbed quiescence, wherein she had wrestled with a vague repulsion from this small strange being, who was a part of herself, and whose coming she had awaited with such exalted hope. . . . In vain Lyndsay argued that dark hair and eyes mattered nothing after all. Knowledge of their inner significance haunted her; knowledge that the moods, the shiftiness, the vacillations, that so irrevocably divided her from her husband, were almost certainly re-incarnate in his child. Yes—his, indubitably his. Yet through all the months of promise "My child" had been the whispered talisman of heart . . . and now behold her punishment! (214–15)

It is difficult to imagine that Lyndsay, "through all the months of promise," would never have wondered what her mixed-race child will look like (especially given that this is one of the obsessive concerns of this period and genre). Diver addresses this difficulty, like the mystery of Lyndsay's decision to marry Videlle, by gesturing to Lyndsay's other-worldly, impractical character. But the unsatisfactory nature of this explanation points to the presence of colonial hybridity in this passage. What is so horrible about "this small strange being" to whom Lyndsay has given birth is not simply its physical difference from her but that it at the same time "was a part of herself." We might link the vagueness of Lyndsay's repulsion to a certain vagueness in the novel's limited description of the child: only her "dark hair and eyes" are catalogued, with no explicit mention of her skin color, suggesting that this child's physical traits make her racially uncategorizable. Thus Lyndsay's repulsion is the result of the uncanniness of seeing herself translated into an indeterminate other. The half-caste with ambiguous skin tones that has come from her own body incarnates the threat of being unable to distinguish between self and other: if this child is flesh of her flesh, how can it also be "irrevocably divided" from her? Bhabha's concept of colonial hybridity helps us to situate the illogicalities of this passage. Lyndsay's enigmatic "vague repulsion," like Laurence's "peculiar distaste," is itself the signal of the colonial hybrid object, the need to construct a more palatable image of the uncanny half-caste.

The inadmissible reality of sameness and difference coexisting within the same body is disavowed through Lyndsay's decision that the child is "his, indubitably his"; she renounces her own claim to ownership and her own culpability. Just as Jim's paternal Christian inheritance was effaced in the privileging of his fictionalized Hindu mother, Lyndsay's own genetic contributions can be overlooked through similar quasi-scientific rhetoric: since the child looks like Videlle, it will act like Videlle, and is therefore Videlle's child. The genetic link assumed between the infant's dark features and the stereotypical character traits of the Eurasian warns Lyndsay and the reader that the apparent similarity between the Eurasian and the Briton is a superficial one: difference, in the shape of inferiority, will inevitably manifest itself to demonstrate that the Eurasian is "irrevocably divided" from the true Englishwoman.[32] The existence of Lyndsay's dark-featured child is her "punishment" for forgetting this truth.

Nonetheless, Lyndsay does not persist in her abdication of the role of mother; she eventually emerges from her initial lethargy and accepts the responsibilities of motherhood with as much dedication as she has lavished on her doomed marriage. And surprisingly, given the tendency in this genre of novel, Baby does not die when she threatens to. She comes to death's door, suffering from the usual vague fevers, but is made well by removal from her father's home to the rejuvenating atmosphere of the mountains. It might seem that Lyndsay's acceptance of her child, and the baby's survival, leave uncontained the threat of miscegenation. However, these developments speak most notably to the novel's simultaneous interest in propagating an ideal model of womanhood in the face of the threat that the New Woman posed to conventional domesticity.[33] Lyndsay's ability to restore her daughter to health in an environment removed from the maleficent effect of her Eurasian father's home (aided faithfully by Laurence, whose salutary role as foster father is presaged here) suggests the redemptive, assimilative power of English motherhood. This reading is strengthened when the situation is contrasted to the plight of Videlle's half-sister and her son. This weak and sickly Eurasian child also falls dangerously ill, but is nursed back to health through Lyndsay's own assiduous ministrations, despite her revulsion toward both mother and son: "although Lyndsay's recoil from Carrie's unlovely son came perilously near to hate, she could not stand aside and see him done to death by a distracted mother" (267). The child, however, then takes a dangerous turn and dies under his own mother's inept care. The comparison makes clear that the half-caste mother cannot care for her own child the way the true Englishwoman can care for any child.

While Lyndsay is able to overcome her repugnance at her own daughter's racial mixture to a degree sufficient to exonerate her as woman and mother, perhaps the true measure of the novel's rejection of miscegenation is evident in Lyndsay's reaction to the prospect of having a second child with Videlle. As she is emerging from her postpartum depression, she reassures her husband that her apathy was "a passing foolishness, about Baby; and I've put it behind me too. It's not her fault, poor darling. And she needs all my love and—pride if she is to get none from you" (222). The "it" she claims to have put behind her is her discomfort in being married to a Eurasian and having a Eurasian child. But when Videlle suggests "perhaps—better luck—next time," Lyndsay is horrified, revealing that "she had been driven to hope that there might never be a 'next time.'" Videlle retorts "It seems to me . . . that the process of 'putting it all behind you' is not yet quite complete." Eight months later, Lyndsay looks at her child, and we learn that the "process of putting it all behind her was even now far from complete" (326), even as Baby is the "jewel" (328) of her life. Her devotion to her child is her penance, part of her effort to "put it all behind her," to prove that she can transcend the mistake of her marriage. Accepting her child is not evidence of the novel's reluctant acceptance of the unfortunate existence of half-caste children but rather a championing of "great womanliness . . . the ability to suffer in silence; almost without seeming to suffer" (335).

As the novel continues to trace the collapse of the Videlle marriage, Lyndsay escapes from the odious conflicts of her home life on the pretense of taking her delicate child away during the hot weather. She is then free to once again enjoy the wholesome and nurturing friendship of Alan Laurence. He, however, cannot contain his passionate love, and finally declares himself to her. Dumbfounded, she orders him away from her presence, in accordance with her principled fidelity to her marriage vows. Videlle, however, soon hears of the time Lyndsay and Laurence have spent together and descends into a dark jealous rage, exacerbated by his secret addiction to various intoxicants. As part of his general moral and physical decline, he loses all interest in his work, "the work which had been the sheet anchor of his character" (352). In this vile mood, Videlle comes to "the idea of self-slaughter" as

> the simplest possible method of escape from the unendurable; nay more—the devil's thought chimed in with his morbid mood—a method of retaliation which, if he knew anything of Lyndsay, would crush her under the weight of life-long remorse, and make marriage with Laurence intolerable to her, at least for many years to come. The idea fired his heated brain. "Since I seem fated to go to the deuce in any case," was his extenuating thought, "what matter if I force the pace a bit, and give her a taste of the hell I've suffered on her account? By God—and I'll do it too. D— -ed if I don't." (355)

Having made this impetuous decision, he writes a letter of accusation to Lyndsay, ominously hinting at his own impending death and the satisfaction it should bring to her, concluding "if I could kill Laurence first, I should die happy" (356). He discovers, however, that he is too cowardly to actively kill himself, and decides instead to throw himself recklessly into his work in a plague-infested region, as a means of allowing "Fate to give the casting vote; and so avoid the burden of decision"; he dies soon thereafter. While Margaret Stieg reads Videlle's death as his opportunity to redeem himself by "dying nobly . . . for humanity" (9), this reading seems overly generous. There is no indication that his decision is undertaken out of any heroic desire to save lives; on the contrary, he finds that his work, "[w]ork that would have once interested him, now produced irritability and disgust" (357), and the narrative reveals no sympathy or sorrow for him. Above all, Videlle's death immortalizes the characteristics for which he is to be most remembered: inconstancy, irrational jealousy, and a perverted desire to cause yet more suffering to his noble wife.

On the same day that Lyndsay receives Videlle's letter, she also receives news of his death. The letter demonstrating the depths of Videlle's depravity removes the responsibility for true grief, while his deathbed recantation of his accusations simply confirms his vacillating weaknesses. The novel's earlier work in transforming Videlle from a charming and safely exotic other to a reprehensible "native" culminates in this ignoble death. The threat that the disguised Eurasian poses to the productive march of empire is overdeterminedly contained in the novel, first through these devices of distancing the proximate other and finally through the irrevocability of a dishonorable death. Thus, while *Candles in the Wind* is usefully read in terms of Bhabha's concept of colonial hybridity, that process of colonial hybridization itself produces a model of hybridity strategic to its own aims.

Diver's work, both in *Candles in the Wind* and elsewhere, is representative of the ways in which colonial discourse invents the Eurasian as hybrid. Knowledge of the colonial Anglo-Indian's similarity to, and claims to membership in, the British community in India helps us to recognize the ways in which in-betweenness was constructed precisely as a means of distancing the disconcertingly proximate other. This model of hybridity as falling "between two stools" denies the validity of claims either to inheritance of colonial power or to indigenous shares of India, and disavows the possibility of a hybrid community that exists independently of either "parent." Literary criticism's failure to recognize this not only effaces the real mixed-race community in India's efforts toward recognition but also works to erase the multilayered complexity of colonial history. Furthermore, identification of the dubious nature of this model of in-betweenness raises questions about the appropriateness of *hybridity* as a critical term in postcolonial theory. As Robert Young has demonstrated, the genealogy of the concept of hybridity shows it to be complicit in many of the very ideologies postcolonial theory attempts to combat. And as I have attempted to show, hybridity is always manifested within specific historical and geographical circumstances, and thus varies in its implications. To better account for this variety, we need to rethink the tendency in postcolonial theory to celebrate abstract notions of hybridity.

Notes

1. I borrow the idea of the proximate other from Susan Shibanoff's analysis of early Christianity and Islam; Shibanoff in turn makes use of Jonathan Dollimore's formulation of the proximate other in relation to normative notions of

homosexuality and heterosexuality. Both critics use the phrase to identify how disconcerting similarities between hegemonic groups and their near others are relocated through strategies of discourse. See Shibanoff 62–65 and Dollimore 131–48.

2. This essay is part of a larger work on Eurasians in British and Indian literature. At the center of this project is the complex historical ambiguity concerning the terms *Eurasian* and *Anglo-Indian*—a historical ambiguity about which Anglo-American literary criticism remains largely unaware. Segments of the mixed-race population in India advocated for the adoption of the term *Anglo-Indian* as early as 1827, despite marked opposition from the British in India who described themselves as Anglo-Indian. In India today, *Anglo-Indian* is universally understood to refer to the mixed-race population, whereas British and American literary scholarship retains the original denotation, with little acknowledgment of the contested history embodied in the term. In this essay, *Eurasian* and *Anglo-Indian* will both be used to refer to the mixed-race population of India, with *Eurasian* generally referring to the construction of mixed-race characters in colonial fiction and *Anglo-Indian* indicating a more formal association with a self-identified community. The British in India who described themselves as Anglo-Indians will simply be referred to as the British in India. For a history of the Anglo-Indian community in India, see Hawes and Caplan.

3. This historical overview draws on Noel P. Gist and Roy Dean Wright's important ethnological study *Marginality and Identity* and on the work of Anglo-Indian historians Frank Anthony, Cedric Dover, Herbert Stark (*Hostages* and *John Ricketts*), and Reginald Maher.

4. For an in-depth account of the history of colonial attitudes to intermarriage, prostitution, and concubinage, see Ballhatchet.

5. This prohibition was made on the premise that the settling of children of mixed blood in England involved

> a political inconvenience because the imperfections of the children, whether bodily or mental, would in process of time be communicated by intermarriage to the generality of the people of Great Britain, and by this means debase the succeeding generations of Englishmen. (Stark, *Hostages* 62)

6. Throughout the British colonial period in India, *country-born* was a common term for Europeans born in India. Rudyard Kipling's 1894 poem "The Native-Born" uses *native-born* in the same fashion:

> A health to the Native-born!
> . . . We learned from our wistful mothers
> To call old England "home";
> We read of the English skylark,
> Of the spring in the English lanes,
> But we screamed with the painted lories
> As we rode on the dusty plains! (78)

Like *Anglo-Indian, country-born* was at times ambiguously used to refer to those of mixed race.

7. It is a common myth that the presence of British women put an end to the homosocial camaraderie Britons and Indians putatively shared before their arrival and caused an escalation of racial tensions and outbreaks of violence. E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, for example, explains Cyril Fielding's disregard of Englishwomen in these terms:

> He had discovered that it is possible to keep in with Indians and Englishmen, but he who would also keep in with Englishwomen must drop the Indians. The two wouldn't combine. Useless to blame either party, useless to blame them for blaming one another. It was just so, and one had to choose. Most Englishmen preferred their own kinswomen, who, coming out in increasing numbers, made life on the home pattern yearly more possible. He had found it convenient and pleasant to associate with Indians and he must pay the price. (65–66)

These myths help to efface the ways in which the solidification of racist discourses in the nineteenth century was instrumental to expansionist colonial practices. For an astute challenge of these myths, see Stoler, "Rethinking Colonial Categories."

8. The official definition of *Anglo-Indian* in the 1935 Government of India Act, repeated in subsequent constitutions of India, is equally problematic:

> An Anglo-Indian means a person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is domiciled within the territory of India and is or was born within such territory of parents habitually resident therein and not established there for temporary purposes only.
> (qtd. in Gist and Wright 2)

The distinctions between *Anglo-Indian* and *Domiciled European* shift over time, sometimes disappearing altogether.

9. Paragraph 336 of the 1947 Constitution of India:

> During the first two years after the commencement of this Constitution appointments of members of the Anglo-Indian community to posts in the railway, customs, postal and telegraph services of the Union shall be made on the same basis as immediately before 15 August 1947. During every succeeding period of two years, the number of posts reserved for the members of the said community in the said services shall, as nearly as possible, be less by ten percent than the numbers of reserved posts during the immediately preceding period of two years: Provided that at the end of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution all such reservations shall cease.

10. After 1961, Anglo-Indians were to be included under the more general category of "native" English-speaking Christians. Thus European Christians, Anglo-Indians, and Indian Christians (ethnically Indian converts to Christianity) fall into one category. Anglo-Indian community leaders, however, have emphatically distanced themselves from Indian Christians (Abel 45).

11. For recent and useful accounts of the contemporary Anglo-Indian population, see Roychowdhury and Caplan.

12. Census figures for Anglo-Indians in the last decades when such a category was enumerated are as follows: in 1931, 138,395; in 1941, 140,422; in 1951, 111,637 (Spencer 61; Caplan 69). In 1961, after Anglo-Indian was removed as a distinct category, 223,781 Indians reported English as their mother tongue (Anthony 9). Anthony estimates that the 1941 population was almost double that returned by the census. For a useful account of the problems of Anglo-Indian identity reflected in census taking, see Caplan 66–76.

13. Including contemporary Indian fiction. See for example I. Allan Sealy, *The Trotter-Nama* (1988); Vikram Chandra, *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1997); and Ayub Khan-Din, *Last Dance at Dum Dum* (1999).

14. Burke's criticism of the economic practices of the British government in India often used the figurative language of rape. For example, in "A Letter to a Member of the National Assembly," written in 1772, Burke described the East India Company as "guardians to a very handsome and rich lady in Hindostan" and the subsequent actions of the British Parliament as taking "the lady into its tender, fond, grasping arms, pretending all the while . . . that no rape or violence was intended" (qtd. in Paxton 1). See also Burke 83–89.

15. Paxton never acknowledges that *Anglo-Indian* is a contested term in the very period she is discussing in her chapter on interracial marriage (chapter 6).

Curiously, Jenny Sharpe identifies herself as "an Anglo-Indian/Eurasian who was born in England and raised in India" ("Figures" 139) and provides a footnote with a simplified (and inaccurate) history of the term:

> Under British rule, the term "Anglo-Indian" designated those of British ancestry who were born in India. After Independence the Eurasians, who were of mixed parentage, assumed the name of "Anglo-Indians" for themselves. (139n)

Anglo-Indian was adopted by Eurasians much earlier than independence in 1947. In the 1911 census of India, for example, *Anglo-Indian* was used to designate the mixed-race population.

16. Stieg asserts that these romances are the "feminine analog of the adventure story." Paxton destabilizes the gendered assumptions of Stieg's work:

> Scholars working in older critical traditions often relied upon genre hierarchies to screen out these gender differences, valorizing male "adventure" novels and dismissing the large corpus of novels by Anglo-Indian [that is, British] women by labeling them inferior "romances." (29)

17. In her analysis of B. M. Croker's *Babes in the Wood,* Sainsbury does consider the Eurasian characters, but only to briefly point out that they are social types from which British characters are to learn that intermarriage is bad for English economic prosperity.

18. *Half-caste,* like *chi-chi, half-and-half, blacky-white,* etc., was used derogatorily to refer to India's mixed-race population. My usage of it in this essay should be understood to refer to colonial representations of Eurasians. Kipling's truism itself disguises its own fallacy. Apart from the fact that it is usually quoted out of context, ignoring the contradictory concluding line of "The Ballad of East and West" ("But there is neither East nor West, border, nor breed, nor birth, / When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!"), Kipling's line also rewrites the history of racial mixture. "The Ballad of East and West" poeticizes an actual exchange between an English colonel's son and an Afghan renegade—but that "English" colonel was Sir Robert Warburton, the son of an Englishman and an Afghani princess, thus himself racially mixed (Deutsch and Wiener 499–500).

19. I am using *he* for the half-caste here simply because the focus of this essay is a male Eurasian character. While a full discussion of the different implications that male and female Eurasians would pose to colonial discourse is outside the scope of this essay, it is important to note that such differences certainly do exist.

20. A 1937 survey of British Anglo-Indian literature laments the "poverty of the harvest from this 'hybrid' civilization" (Hemenway 18). Maud Diver's *The Englishwoman in India* is a salient demonstration of British anxieties about contamination or hybridization. She warns, for example, against the insidious effects of the "moral microbes" of India:

> Yes, those who live for any length of time in India have to reckon with that insidious tendency to fatalism—to accept men and things as they find them, without enthusiasm and without criticism—which lurks in the very air they breathe. (6)

21. I see a distinction between Bhabha's colonial hybridity as articulated in "Signs Taken for Wonders" and his concept of cultural hybridity as discussed in the later chapters of *The Location of Culture.* Briefly, while *colonial hybridity* is his name for a process of ambivalence in colonial discourse, his use of *cultural hybridity* is much baggier, apparently extending to all cultural processes and to culture itself. It is important to insist on specificity if these terms are to have any use in the description and analysis of certain classes of experience. For a more in-depth discussion of this distinction, see my article "'You Are an Anglo-Indian?'"

22. *Anglo-Indian* in the Bengali association is meant to refer to Europeans, whereas in the southern Indian organization it refers to Eurasians.

23. The Sinclair series is comprised of *Lilámani: A Study in Possibilities* (1911), *Far to Seek: A Romance of England and India* (1921), *The Singer Passes: An Indian Tapestry* (1934), and *The Dream Prevails: A Story of India* (1938). *Lilámani,* written at roughly the same time as *Candles in the Wind,* seems contradictorily to celebrate the possibility of a union between East and West in marriage. I maintain that there is not in fact a contradiction between the ideologies of these works. As the later sequels to *Lilámani* make clear, the Sinclair union is to be read allegorically and not as a prescription for greater interracial harmony through intermarriage. In both *Candles in the Wind* and the later Sinclair novels, the disturbing realities of the Eurasian must be disavowed, and racial purity must be maintained.

24. In the part of the passage that I've omitted, Laurence declares, "the Anglo-Indian's contempt of him is a mild affair compared with the scorn of the high-caste native"—illustrating not only Diver's refusal to cede *Anglo-Indian* to the Eurasians but also her propagation of the myth that Indians despised Eurasians even more than did the British. This common myth not only bolstered British self-esteem but also provided a rationalization for disallowing Eurasians positions of leadership, since, it was claimed, Indian subordinates would not respect such a leader.

25. Note that it is a Scotsman, not a proper Englishman, who has shown his lack of restraint both in his choice of sexual partner and in his drinking.

26. Note that Laurence's need to assert his own magnanimity ("It's not race prejudice that puts one off") remains firmly anchored in the male homosocial realm of "fine fellows." He makes no comment about the satisfactoriness of Indian women as individuals, presumably because he has no interaction with any. While Laurence has asserted that it is white men who choose to have relations with Indian women, in his gendering of all "Asiatics," both "Hindu and Mohammedan," as "fine fellows," Indian women are erased. This points to the gendered implications of interracial couplings: while an Englishman marrying an Indian woman can be afforded a certain leniency, through the discardability of Indian women, the same does not generally hold true in British colonial novels for Englishwomen marrying Indian men. British women who knowingly desired and married "native" men were often considered mentally diseased (Boxwallah 182) or sexually deranged: "It is not difficult to account for the unhappiness of a white woman married to an Indian. Unless she is sexually perverted, she has violated her own nature in marrying a man of coloured race" (Boxwallah 288).

27. Jenny Sharpe makes a similar argument in *Allegories of Empire.* Paxton makes it convincingly clear that the British anxiety about the threat of rape has little or nothing to do with real or potential incidents of rape in the colony.

28. Such as cautionary tales about poor Indian boarders posing as rajahs to woo English girls or concealing the fact that they already have a harem of wives at home. For example:

> To the shop girl and the lodging-house keeper's daughter, every Indian student is a young prince. In point of fact, he is more often a man of low caste, the son of a wealthy trader, contractor or successful lawyer. Marriage with such men means to an Englishwoman the deepest misery. Cases are not unknown where a student has brought an English wife to India only to abandon her, and she has returned to her mother with an illegitimate child and the news that her husband was married before ever he left India. (Boxwallah 286)

29. W. D. Arnold's *Oakfield,* for example, concerns itself with trying to understand the seemingly natural disposition of the "native" for deceitfulness.

30. It is unclear why Videlle's story is a "case" at all—that is, a matter for the station police to have knowledge of, creating the impression that there's an implicit criminality, present or future, in the Videlle marriage.

31. At the turn of the century, interreligious couples did have the option of a civil marriage ceremony; one presumes that this is the sort of marriage that the ill-fated Chris and Viva Davenunt chose in Flora Steele's *Voices in the Night* (1900), since Chris seems clearly to have remained a Hindu. Likewise in *Lilámani,* Roy's parents must have had a civil marriage, as they were married in Europe and yet she remained a devout (though outcaste) Hindu in her early marriage. Their nuptials are only briefly described, as "brief, unromantic formalities" (*Lilámani* 174). In S. M. Mitra's 1909 *Hindupore,* an Irish nobleman falls in love with an Indian princess and they have a triple marriage: Hindu, Christian, and civil. The similarities between this Indian novel and Diver's *Lilámani* merit investigation.

32. On eugenics and the duty of British women to reproduce, see Ann Stoler, "Carnal Knowledge."

33. The motif of a good woman overcoming her repugnance at her racially mixed child occurs as well in Henry Bruce's *The Eurasian* (1913). Here, an English nursemaid married to a Eurasian vows after giving birth that "she knew perfectly in advance, that she would hate this child" (244). But when the child is placed in her arms, she suddenly discovers love for it: "And that is one of the safest tests of a good woman. She loves her child not because she loves the father . . . not because of its qualities. . . . She loves it because it is her child, because it is her duty to do so, and because she cannot help loving it" (244–45). These novels' need to uphold traditional definitions of woman and mother seems to supersede their castigation of miscegenation.

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Gypsies and Lesbian Desire: Vita Sackville-West, Violet Trefusis, and Virginia Woolf

Kirstie Blair

> Long Barn, Knole, Richmond and Bloomsbury. All too familiar and entrapping. Either *I* am at home, and you are strange; or *you* are at home, and I am strange; so neither is the real essential person, and confusion results.
>
> But in the Basque provinces, among a host of *zingaros,* we should both be equally strange and equally real.
>
> —Sackville-West to Woolf, *Letters* 54

When Vita Sackville-West tries to persuade Virginia Woolf to run away with the "zingaros," Spanish gypsies, she alludes to a discourse evident both in her earlier relationships with women and in her novels *Challenge* and *Heritage,* where gypsies represent liberation, excitement, danger, and the free expression of sexuality. Sackville-West's fantasy of homelessness among the gypsies provides the imagined means for two women lovers to value their estrangement from familiar and familial settings, to make it a virtue, part of their true selves. As my epigraph suggests, to be "strange" is to be "real." Confusion, Sackville-West implies, would vanish in a setting away from the deceptive comforts of home and England, with an alien band who are themselves both estranged from the lovers and identified with them.

Sackville-West's letter provides one instance of the tantalizing presence of the gypsy as the antithesis of the "familiar and entrapping" in queer writing by women at the start of the twentieth century. The gypsy—and, as we shall see, the Spanish gypsy in particular—haunts texts about desire between women in this period. She wanders through writings by Sackville-West, Violet Trefusis, and Woolf, allusive, evasive, and teasing, a figure around whom fantasies and desires coalesce. The tentative identification with the gypsies in Sackville-West's letter to Woolf is an undercurrent in all three writers, a tug toward "gypsiness" that functions, I argue, as a hint of same-sex desire. Their allusions to gypsies, whether in letters to each other or in texts such as *Orlando,* formed part of a private discourse centered around Sackville-West's alleged gypsy heritage, which served as explanation and excuse for her unconventional behavior. In this, these writers also appropriated a popular interest in gypsy culture that emerged in this period. The decades between 1910 and 1930 were marked by an explosion of writings on gypsies—anthropological studies, popular fiction, poetry, travel writing, folktales, and linguistic studies—that placed the gypsy at the center of commentaries on exoticism, primitivism, nature, sexuality, and savagery. By setting Trefusis's letters to Sackville-West, for instance, in the context of these writings, we can see not only how the popular image of the gypsy was reworked to serve as an image of the lesbian writer, but also how popular accounts of the gypsy were themselves always haunted by implications of deviant sexuality, wayward femininity, and other transgressions against dominant societal standards.

In her recent study of the Spanish gypsy in the popular European imagination, Lou Charnon-Deutsch concludes that representations of the female gypsy suggest "that the border between same and other is porous. . . . She is always hovering about, threatening the subject with regression" (242). The period in which such representations are most pronounced, according to Charnon-Deutsch, is roughly from the 1880s to the 1930s—the decades in which modern concepts of sexuality were in the process of formation. For early twentieth-century women writers, who would not necessarily have defined themselves as possessing a "core identity" as a lesbian, referencing gypsies, I argue, may have served as one means of blurring the boundaries between same and other, familiar and strange, and of situating lesbian sexuality within a recognizable cultural framework, while also subverting this framework by using the traditional image of the passionate heterosexual gypsy (Bizet's Carmen, for example, or Maggie Tulliver in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*) to signal same-sex desire.

The important theorization of lesbian identities in the last two decades has, of course, made it clear that terms such as *lesbian* and related concepts of sapphism and inversion lacked clear definition until around 1928, a watershed year because of the trial of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (Doan xx and passim).[1] More broadly, writers such as Judith Roof have suggested that "lesbian sexuality" itself cannot be pinned down, for it exists "at the interstices of multiple differences rather than necessarily constituting a core identity" (251). Such speculation can, when applied to the early twentieth century, illuminate the association of desire between women with the gypsy. Gypsies were marked as the other in terms of race, class, and religion; the name itself derives from *Egyptian* and points toward the much-discussed myth that the Romany race descended from an ancient Eastern tribe. True gypsies, or Romanies, were perceived and defined as a separate nomadic people possessing their own language, customs, and beliefs. They were traditionally viewed as inspirational artists, musicians, and dancers—and as thieves, horse stealers, and witches. In both nineteenth- and twentieth-century descriptions, gypsies are shifty, hard to categorize, and associated with display and deceptive performance—flamboyant dress, extravagant song and dance, trickery, and sleight of hand. With regard to gender, these associations meant that they appeared to resist neat definitions.

Deborah Epstein Nord has examined how, in the Victorian period, women's writing "associated the gypsy figure with an unconventional femininity located in blood and bone, and with a bodily and temperamental difference figured as the result of accident or heredity" (190). "To imagine oneself a gypsy," she writes, "is to escape, in some sense, from conventional femininity; it is also to claim kinship with those who mirror and explain one's anomalousness" (192). As the discourse of the "invert" took shape in the early twentieth century—in precisely the same decades when scholars were attempting to define the "core identity" of the gypsy—the gypsy's difference and anomalousness meant that she could be appropriated by women seeking a way to engage with this discourse without necessarily subscribing to the "Stephen Gordon" myth of the mannish woman.[2] Claiming kinship with gypsies, I will suggest, provided one means for women engaged in same-sex relationships to play with gender roles, particularly by emphasizing their femininity while also consciously representing femininity as a masquerade. When Violet Trefusis imagined herself and was imagined as a gypsy, for example, the perceived passionate heterosexuality of the gypsy woman might act as protective coloring, but as we shall see, it also highlights her deliberate performance of an ultrafeminine role.

Popular culture and literature in the first decades of the twentieth century tended to highlight this performative aspect of gypsiness by associating gypsies with exotic "oriental" fashions: indeed, costumes based on gypsy style were widely worn in the 1920s, and it was popular, for the upper classes at least, to be painted or photographed in Spanish gypsy dress.[3] Laura Doan warns us, with regard to masculine dress, of the dangers inherent in reading particular women's fashions as signs of lesbian sexuality in the early twentieth century, given that lesbians were not fully recognized as a distinct and identifiable social group (95–123); her argument also holds true for gypsy dress and fantasies of gypsy life, which were fairly widespread in the period. Yet the extravagance, orientalism, and exoticism associated with gypsy clothing and customs does feed into an emerging homoerotic discourse. The ostentatiously gay Eddy Sackville-West, for instance, wrote to E. M. Forster that the Berlin cabarets of the 1920s and 30s (the period when Harold Nicolson worked there and Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf visited) featured men dressed as female Spanish dancers, a key gypsy persona (qtd. in Lee 521).[4] While on the one hand the adoption of gypsy costume by women stages a clichéd, romanticized contempt for modern civilization—as opposed to the more subversive, visibly disturbing implications of men cross-dressing as female Spanish gypsies, or "female masculinity"—on the other hand, gypsy dress already implies the potential for unregulated sexual behavior. With regard to lesbian identity, masculine costume has been much discussed, but the adoption of fashions that accentuate femininity, including gypsy dress, has not. Yet there are many instances, in popular culture as well as in the writings of Sackville-West, Trefusis, and Woolf, where these styles meld. In *Eyes of a Gypsy* (1926), for instance, a novel by the well-known Canadian author John Murray Gibbon, the half-gypsy heroine, whose passionate, flirtatious friendships with both a young female artist and her male suitor strongly hint at an ambiguous sexuality, occasionally wears men's clothing and runs a statistical bureau by day, while by night she adopts New York's latest gypsy bohemian fashions and tells fortunes to a wealthy clientele.[5]

Such fantasies of being a gypsy can underscore the playful, performative nature of sexuality, as highlighted for us by Judith Butler's and Sue-Ellen Case's work on gender construction and lesbianism, or Marjorie Garber's writings on cross-dressing and bisexuality. Besides its playfulness, however, the deployment of the gypsy, whether literally—in the form of style and costume—or figuratively, hints at the dangerous consequences of desire between women. For a woman writer to ally herself with the gypsy as a means of imagining a relationship between women courts the danger of identifying with a clearly defined outgroup in Western society, an outgroup against whom legislation was stepped up in the early decades of the twentieth century. In an unpublished novel by Trefusis, for instance, written after the bitter ending of her affair with Sackville-West, the heroine is trapped between civilization and her love for Kalo, a Spanish gypsy (implicitly Sackville-West), and she ends up "Disowned by her own class, disowned by the gypsies, forsaken by all" (Souhami 223).

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Before turning to the writings of Trefusis, Sackville-West, and Woolf, it is important to place them in context in order to show how their depiction of gypsies was influenced by (and itself influenced) the contemporary British engagement, even obsession, with the gypsy. In 1912 the editor of one folklore journal wrote that he possessed "hundreds" of press cuttings on gypsies from the last few years (Editorial). This intense reportage, plus a heightened interest in control and legislation, may have responded to a rise in immigration from various European tribes whose Eastern dress marked them as foreign (Fraser 231–32). Since the foundation of the Gypsy Lore Society in 1888, moreover, the culture, customs, folklore, and language of the gypsy had gradually become an acceptable subject of academic study. One writer claimed that by 1912 gypsy lore was "no longer the private study of a few, but, we can well say, a national topic of interest" (Inglish 47). The *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* initially foundered in 1892 but was revived in 1907, and despite a relatively small list of subscribers, managed to run throughout the century. For anyone wishing to investigate gypsy culture, this would have been a readily available source in libraries and institutions. A related journal, *The Romanitshels,' Didakais,' and Folk-Lore Gazette,* aimed for a wider circulation but does not seem to have succeeded, despite the support of such eminent literary figures as Arthur Symons, Theodore Watts-Dunton, and H. G. Wells. A third journal, *The Gypsy* (1915–16), designed to highlight European, "Bohemian" art and literature, was published from Dublin, but managed only two volumes before the Easter Rising caused its collapse.

The success of various folklore and gypsy societies stemmed in part from the perception that the gypsy way of life was threatened and needed to be preserved if it were not to vanish completely. As anthropologists sought to record the beliefs and behavior of "primitive" societies for posterity, so the members of the Gypsy Lore Society aimed to point out that gypsies constituted one of these threatened groups and that their "pagan" customs and rites and unusual language provided a vital link between "savagery" and "civilization," showing how ancient beliefs could coexist with modern culture. Konrad Bercovici, author of several romantic accounts of gypsy life in the 1920s, commented, "They are our only link with the East, with mystery, with magic" (*Story* 217), and Irving Brown, an American travel writer who adopted gypsy dress, learnt Romany, and "passed" as a Spanish gypsy for several years, wrote in 1922 that gypsies "bring us all the mystery of the Orient" (14). Walter Starkie, an academic who similarly traveled around Spain with the gypsies as an itinerant musician, observed in *Don Gypsy* (1936) that the tribe he encountered "was like a rare fauna that naturalists roam the world to discover" (89). The gypsy is further romanticized by this sense that real gypsies were an endangered species, vanishing from their traditional haunts and pastimes or becoming reduced to a tourist attraction. In Sheila Kaye-Smith's short story "The Fear of Streets" (1926), for instance, this clash between gypsy life and modern civilization is emphasized in the story of an old farmer who traditionally let gypsies camp on his land but cannot save his fields from going to the council for a housing estate after his death. "Some day there won't be any tents by the wayside, same as there won't be any farms in the fields," he laments (202).

Literary interest in gypsies was spurred by this nostalgic vision of them as pastoral figures, among the last to evade the spread of cities, who must either be integrated—and lose the characteristics that make them exceptional—or die. This strand of thought is particularly evident in popular fiction that depicts gypsy-identified women marrying "civilized" men.[6] In three representative novels of this genre—Rosamond Napier's *The Heart of a Gypsy* (1909), Mary Webb's *Gone to Earth* (1917), and Arthur Compton-Rickett's *Gypsy Blood* (1929)—it becomes clear that the relationships depicted—Meridiana Pharaoh and a doctor in Napier, Hazel Woodus and a clergyman in Webb, and Carlotta and a young upper-class artist in Compton-Rickett—are pointed metaphors for the clash of ways of life. In *The Heart of a Gypsy* Meridiana is a child abandoned by her gypsy parents and brought up by a clergyman's family. She practices magic, engages in unfeminine pursuits such as skinning animals, and is associated with an implicitly masculine savagery and violence that the book locates in nature. At one point she is described as "charged with virility" (Napier 38). "I'm a pagan. A pantheist!" Meridiana asserts defiantly, and she is identified with her beloved beech tree to the extent that when it is uprooted in a storm, she dies with it. Webb's Hazel, in a novel that seems strongly influenced by Napier's work, is "everything rich, vivid and vital" (21), half-gypsy and the archetypal child of nature, brought up in an isolated valley, musical, animal-loving, and wholly innocent of society's rules. Like Meridiana, her attitude to nature is mystical, and she practices witchcraft. She is linked throughout with her pet fox, and her death occurs when she and the fox are pursued by the hunt led by the aristocratic English lover she has rejected; she leaps into a quarry to escape. *Gone to Earth* sold well and was in its turn influential, clearly so in the case of Compton-Rickett's *Gypsy Blood,* in which the gypsy, Carlotta, is described as a "charming and healthy young pagan" (13) and repeatedly linked to elemental natural forces and sexuality. Like Meridiana, she is also strongly identified with a mystical tree, associated with ancient Druidic worship.

Without the guilt imposed by religion and society, all three heroines are open and assertive about their strong sexual desires. When Carlotta refuses to marry the hero, Dirke, for example, in favor of an open sexual relationship with him, Compton-Rickett comments, "Here was a battle of sex with the conditions, so it seemed, queerly inverted" (92). The conjunction of queerness and inversion (the latter a word made prominent by the trial of *The Well of Loneliness*) emphasizes the "masculine" way in which Carlotta is behaving by her insistence on the natural laws of desire, associated with "freedom, abandonment" (113). Similarly, in one of Bercovici's gypsy stories he observes of the heroine and her open sexual relationship with her upper-class lover, "she needed no ceremony, no priest, no law, no Bible. . . . She was the free child of a free race" (*Gypsy Blood* 136). These relationships are inevitably disastrous. Unconventional female desire, each novelist implies, cannot either be encompassed in the oppressive framework of traditional marriage or indulged outside it. When they cannot be incorporated into the social structure, the only way out for these wayward heroines lies in violent death or suicide, a fate paralleling that of many homosexual or lesbian characters in twentieth-century fiction.

Many of the attributes assigned to female gypsies here—"primitive" sexuality, paganism, witchcraft, closeness to nature—are also evident in texts that deal, with varying degrees of explicitness, with desire between women, suggesting the potential for the gypsy figure to overlap with images of the lesbian. In Rosamond Lehmann's *Dusty Answer* (1927), for instance, an allusion to paganism is linked to Judith's unexpressed desire for her college friend Jennifer as she watches her bathe: "'Glorious, glorious pagan that I adore!' whispered the voice in Judith that could never speak out" (137). Paganism also recurs in Trefusis's letters to Sackville-West: "Oh Mitya! You are so essentially pagan, classically pagan" (qtd. in Sharpe 63). Sackville-West used the language of witchcraft, another hallmark of the gypsy, to describe Trefusis in the epigraph to *Challenge,* which begins (in Romany): "This book is thine, honoured witch" (translated by Julian 61). Sackville-West's and Trefusis's confidante and the former's lover, Pat Dansey, used an image of a witch as her personal motto (Souhami 214). Sylvia Townsend Warner, whose poem on an encounter with a female gypsy is discussed in the conclusion to this essay, hints at subversive desires in *Lolly Willowes* (1926), a novel in which a spinster moves to a remote village and discovers her identity as a witch amid mystical forests and pagan rituals. When Warner and her partner Valentine Ackland joked about being witches, they probably did so because of longstanding associations with lesbianism (Harman 59). Warner, Ackland, and Sackville-West were all strongly drawn to traditional rural life, and their works, such as Sackville-West's prize-winning poem *The Land* (1926), reveal a deeply reverent attitude toward nature. Woolf makes a playful dig at this nature worship in Orlando's mystical attachment to her oak tree. While it is unlikely that Woolf or Sackville-West knew of Napier's heroine and her poetic fascination with her beech tree, reading this popular fiction in tandem with other works reveals how the figures of the gypsy woman and the lesbian woman, in literature at least, have vital attributes in common.

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Vita Sackville-West was already fascinated by gypsies and intrigued by her own Spanish ancestry by 1918, when her affair with Violet Keppel (later Trefusis) began. Of her first encounter with Spanish gypsies on her trip there in 1913, she noted "God, how free and happy I feel!" (qtd. in Glendinning 55). In her investigation of her gypsy origins in *Pepita* (1937), she comments on her experience of watching gypsies dance:

> They were without exception the most beautiful human beings I ever wish to see . . . like wild things that never ought to have submitted to the coaxing of even the kindliest hand. (35)

Sackville-West is implicitly in the position of the civilized spectator who might tame this wildness, bring it to heel; she watches with desire and with a sense of her difference. Yet she is also conscious of her own gypsy blood, of her affinity with these creatures. Her grandmother Pepita, she argues, was "half gypsy and half aristocrat" (23), a combination that does not cancel out gypsy traits so much as heighten them by contrast. With Sackville-West's interest in gypsy culture, she may well have been familiar with the theory that gypsies were the remnants of an ancient Egyptian or Indian nobility. As Irving Brown writes, "The Romanies are the true aristocrats: enchanting but aloof, captivating, intoxicating but proud and unsubmissive" (41). Bercovici relates that early English documents describe people "of good parentage" traveling with the gypsies and concludes "that a good deal of Gypsy blood flows in a certain strata of English society" (*Story* 211). Of course, the Sackville-Wests, whose gypsy descent was a topic of popular knowledge thanks to a sensational inheritance trial in 1910, could have been a key example.[7] Evidently the notion that gypsy blood ran in the veins of the aristocracy (and vice versa) was tempting for novelists: in *Half a Gipsy* (1916) by Christine Field, for example, an itinerant Russian gypsy singer turns out to be the long-lost son of a wealthy count; and in one of May Wynne's bestselling romances, loosely based on historical fact, an eighteenth-century upper-class young Englishman abandons his family to become ruler of a gypsy tribe.

Recalling her first visit to Spain in her journal, Sackville-West exclaims, "I would give my soul to go there with Violet" (qtd. in Nicolson 48). Trefusis had already written to her, years earlier, that they should travel to Spain together, "you as my pupil, I as your cicerone . . . I will show you eyes of black velvet . . . the sevillana, the fandango, undulating bodies, throbbing castanets" (70). It is interesting that she portrays herself as already a knowing guide to Spanish sexuality (and perhaps particularly female sexuality), with Sackville-West as the innocent. Knowing that Sackville-West could be flattered by references to her Spanish blood and dark good looks, Trefusis told her in 1918 that she should be painted by William Strang, a popular artist who "does Spanish women so well" (qtd. in Souhami 131). Later, in exile on the continent, Trefusis writes of her longing to live in Spain forever with Sackville-West, in a world of "sun and love, and singing and dancing" (148). Spain represents liberation from conventional society, as it may have done for Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, who were in Andalucia in 1913 and 1915; for Gerald Brenan, who lived in Andalucia from 1920 and was visited by the Woolfs in 1923; and for Valentine Ackland, who journeyed to Spain with her first woman lover in 1925.

In the letters exchanged between Sackville-West and Trefusis it is clear that their private elaboration of the gypsy myth provided both lovers with an intense fantasy of escape and a way of referring to an illicit but natural sexuality. The first specific mention of a gypsy woman in an early letter from Trefusis (25 Jan. 1918) also suggests her additional potential to figure as the writer herself. She presents a fable to Sackville-West in which a woman artist's choice of a bourgeois life with husband and children splits her into two selves, woman and artist:

> Presently, they met; they confronted each other, the woman serene, loving, imperturbable, the artist defiant, jealous, irritated beyond endurance. And the artist stood and jeered at the woman. Poor artist: Dishevelled, irresponsible gypsy, it was more than she could bear—Now the woman belonged heart and soul to her husband and her children, but the artist belonged to no one, or rather to humanity. Fancy one, she roams the earth, here today, gone tomorrow. (75)

One of the striking things about this vision is that Trefusis uses it to imagine a woman artist desiring another woman, her Platonic other half. The jealousy and irritation, it is implied, might stem from sexual jealousy as well as envy, as the gypsy artist seeks to separate the woman from her comfortable heterosexual existence. The artist here is plainly superior, but Trefusis's description does introduce doubt as to whether the artist willingly abandons home and stability, like Bercovici's gypsy, who has "locked himself out of gates of modern civilization, and roams freely on the highways and byways of the world" (*Story* 3), or whether she is exiled, shut out by others.

Six months after this letter, Sackville-West and Trefusis were lovers, and now when the gypsy appears in Trefusis's letters, she represents the "new" identity conferred on Sackville-West by their love. Shortly after the affair began, Trefusis wrote that all her family had noticed that *"you have also changed"*:

> They said, this evening after you had gone, that you were like a dazzling Gypsy. My sister's words, not mine. A Gypsy potentate, a sovereign—what you will, but still a Gypsy. (78)

Trefusis cleverly implies that their love has brought the "gypsy" elements of Sackville-West's heritage to the surface, stamping her as powerful and glamorous. Knowing Sackville-West's interest in her family background, she plays on this to imply that their passion is natural and inevitable given the gypsy blood in her veins—more natural, indeed, than Sackville-West's marriage and motherhood. The next mention of gypsies in the letters suggests that this fantasy had been considerably embroidered:

> Oh Mitya, *chepescar!* You *know* we're different—Gypsies in a world of "landed gentry." You, my poor Mitya, they've taken you and they've burnt your caravan. They've thrown away your pots and pans and your half-mended wicker chairs. They've pulled down your sleeves and buttoned up your collar! They've forced you to sleep beneath a self-respecting roof with no chinks to let the stars through—but I, Mitya, they haven't caught *me* yet. I snap my fingers in their faces. Come away, Mitya, come away, when they're all asleep in their snug white beds. . . . I'll wait for you at the crossroads. . . . Ah, Beloved! (93)

Chepescar is a Romany word meaning elope, part of an intimate language used between the lovers (the nickname Mitya is possibly also drawn from Romany). Biographers have paid little attention to this language, noting simply that it seems to be borrowed from George Meredith's classic account of traveling among the Spanish gypsies, *The Zincali* (1841), interest in which revived in the first decades of the twentieth century, when it was frequently reprinted. Yet it is surely important that gypsy language meant enough to both women that they were prepared to learn it together in order to use it as a secret (or semisecret, given widespread interest in Romany) vocabulary to express desire and love. "How wonderfully fluent you have become in Z—," Trefusis remarks, teasingly praising Sackville-West's skill at expressing desire (158). "Z—" almost certainly stands for Zincali, and the remark implies that Sackville-West's letters may have contained more gypsy dialect than Trefusis's own. One particular myth about Romany that doubtless appealed to Sackville-West and Trefusis was that it did not contain any words for duty or possession, concepts held to be totally alien to gypsy life.[8] Trefusis almost always uses Romany vocabulary when she wants to stress the intensity of their relationship—*nonero jeli* (our love), *man camelo tuti* (I can't live without you), *men tiliche* (my darling)—or to persuade Sackville-West to elope: *sartute loude gayeres* (escape with you). The exception is her repeated use of the word *romandinae* (marriage) in relation to her marriage to Denys Trefusis, perhaps as a means of euphemistically avoiding the implications of the English term—gypsy weddings, after all, reputedly lasted only as long as the couple still loved—or of hinting to Sackville-West that Denys is intruding into their intimacy, their shared language.

In these letters Trefusis attempts, with increasing desperation, to persuade Sackville-West that her lesbian affair is incompatible with her deep love of the trappings of the English aristocracy, represented by her ancestal home Knole, the cultivated English countryside, and her upper-class heritage, however eccentric. When Trefusis writes "You *know* we're different," she seeks to force Sackville-West to acknowledge their relative estrangement from heterosexuality, and by imaging this through the gypsy she seeks to broaden it to issues of class and tradition: she and Sackville-West, as artists and lovers, must escape the hypocrisy of the gentry class. This is a playful picture, but note that in the quote above Trefusis actually imagines a scene of destruction and disciplining ("they've taken you . . . they've forced you"), adding a disturbing edge to such cross-class identification.

This quotation is one of the first instances in which Trefusis imagines Sackville-West potentially playing a *male* gypsy role, engaging in traditional pursuits of mending furniture and metalware and dressed in a shirt and collar. But this is not the entire point of the fantasy, as a later reference shows:

> You, Mitya, my erstwhile gitana, going and mixing yourself up with the "landed classes" and education reform and such stuff! . . . You whom I sometimes think should be wandering the high roads of the world with no roof over your head and nothing but a bundle to call your own . . . Gypsy, come away! (248–49)

Again, Trefusis pours scorn on the political pursuits of the landed gentry. She unquestionably spoke enough Spanish to know that "gitana" (gypsy) is feminine. The oscillation in Trefusis's letters between picturing Sackville-West as a dashing and imperious (but lower-class) male lover and as a female gypsy shows again the imagined fluidity of sexual and class identity, which does not quite fit with assessments of Sackville-West and Trefusis as a butch/femme couple: Trefusis in part substitutes this with a suggestive model of two (female) gypsies on the open road.[9] In 1919 she wrote, disingenuously, from Sussex:

> I forgot to tell you, there is a Gypsy caravan not far from here . . . and a blue spiral of smoke curls insidiously around the haggard pines. . . . Also there was a tall girl, with glittering brass earrings, great tawny braids of hair, and a face brown as a berry. She stood, her arms akimbo, scowling into space. . . . I think I will go and see if I can find them again this afternoon, but like you, and everything else, they will have fled. (166–67)

Trefusis tantalizes Sackville-West with the notion that she might gaze at and perhaps be attracted to a "real" gypsy woman, who is both linked to Sackville-West (in another letter, Trefusis pictures Sackville-West sitting by a "treacherous fire . . . the flames glinting on the gold of your earrings" [266]) and alien to both women. Ultimately, the possibility of finding freedom with either the gypsy woman or Sackville-West seems poignantly unattainable.

Sackville-West's letters to Trefusis were destroyed by Denys Trefusis, but in the two novels she wrote during their involvement, *Challenge* (written in 1918 but unpublished in Britain) and *Heritage* (1919), the gypsy is a potent presence. *Challenge,* a loosely disguised fictional study of her relationship with Trefusis, centers on the turbulent romance between Julian, the upper-class hero, who is dedicated to the cause of an independence movement on a fictional Greek island, and Eve, who is uninterested in his politics and seeks to prioritize their love at the cost of all else. Sackville-West represents Eve as the type of the seductive, ultrafeminine gypsy woman, a suitable foil to her masculine Julian:

> A cloak of black velvet, he thought to himself, as he continued to gaze unseeingly at her; a dusky voice, a gypsy among voices. . . . All things seductive and insinuating. (108)

Eve/Trefusis's "insinuating" femininity is something to be resisted, and Julian's calling Eve a gypsy is an accusation: "Julian sprang up; he caught her by the wrist,—'Gypsy!' 'Come with the gypsy?'" (266). Trefusis's exclamations are here changed to Eve's more hesitant question. In her attempt to woo Julian away from his duties of civic leadership, Eve resembles the seductive gypsy women of popular fiction, and like them she is punished by death.

Whereas *Challenge* is straightforward in its assignment of gender roles and its attitude toward the gypsy, *Heritage,* perhaps because it is more distanced from the personal mythology of Sackville-West and Trefusis, is considerably more speculative. It begins with an encounter between Malory, a repressed Englishman restlessly wandering the globe, and the unnamed narrator, as they holiday in Europe. Malory tells the narrator about the time he spent working in England on the Pennistans' farm in Kent, his growing interest in the farmer's daughter, Ruth Pennistan, her love for him (which he fails to recognize), and his role in her elopement with her violent, virile cousin, Rawdon. Fascinated by this story and by Malory himself, the narrator of *Heritage* then travels to the farm and works there himself, witnessing the decline of Ruth and Rawdon's marriage. In the final part of the book, Malory tells the narrator about his life since they met in a series of letters, centering on his climactic meetings with Ruth, his final acknowledgment of his love for her, and their eventual union. On the surface, then, the long drawn-out relationship between Ruth and Malory is the focus of the plot, but it also has an alternative center in the strongly felt connection between Malory and the narrator, a connection that is strangely associated with gypsiness.

The gypsy enters the plot through Ruth's grandmother, Conchita, a Spanish dancer of gypsy stock. Gypsiness, then, is the "heritage" transmitted to her descendant, and it is suggested as the reason why Ruth Pennistan seems to stand out from her English rural surroundings. At a key point Malory describes an incident when he and Ruth encountered a gypsy encampment:

> "I've never outgrown the love of gipsies that lurks in every boy. Have you?" His eyes were actually sparkling as he asked the question, and I was overcome by a feeling of guilt. Often I had thought this man a prig. (44)

Malory's love of gypsies is perceived as a redeeming quality, a sign of his affinity to the narrator as well as to the gypsies themselves. He recognizes, however, that he is set apart from the gypsies by class and by his fastidiousness, noting, "I was loving the camp self-consciously, almost voluntarily, aware that I was loving it and rather pleased with myself for doing so" (44). Malory senses that there will always be something of the poseur in his fascination for gypsies: like Trefusis and Sackville-West, he can maintain his illusions about gypsies without having to face the realities of poverty, dirt, and social exclusion. Directly after coming upon the encampment, he and Ruth see Rawdon with a gypsy woman, suggesting the link between gypsies and unregulated sexuality. Shortly after this Malory ironically acknowledges his romantic view of Ruth's heritage when he buys her a colored scarf and some earrings: "for I had a fancy to see her tricked out as a gipsy" (55). "Tricked out," though, suggests that Malory wants to see his gifts simply as dressing up. He fails to recognize his own investment in Ruth's gypsy blood or the significance of his gifts for her, particularly given that in gypsy culture the gift of a scarf or handkerchief signifies a marriage proposal.[10] Indeed, this scene marks Ruth's realization of her love for Malory, a love associated with his interest in her heritage. When Rawdon enters and sees Ruth dressed up in gypsy garb, he is furious, perhaps because this masquerade seems to taunt him in the implication that Ruth is flaunting her sexuality for Malory (the clothes awaken what Malory describes as a "latent instinct" [55] of gypsy behavior) and in providing a mocking reference to his encounter with the gypsy woman.

The gypsy in *Heritage* represents instinctual passion—Malory sees Ruth and Rawdon, the young descendants of Conchita, as an inevitable pairing because they are "two bohemian creatures" (79), sensual and natural where he is refined and civilized. Yet gypsies also haunt the novel in less easily categorizable ways. Malory feels a sense of the uncanny in his stay with the Pennistans, where he is haunted by an "unseen presence," "the sensation that I was in the midst of some foreign encampment" (21)—a description that associates these sensations with his visit to the gypsy camp. Later, the narrator is similarly unsettled by something lurking behind the Englishness of this farm. Witnessing a violent confrontation between Ruth and Rawdon, he has an intense vision of Malory:

> I felt Malory's presence in the garden, waiting like me, and, like me, entirely passive. . . . Then a little scent floated out to me, and I wondered vaguely what it was, and what were the memories it awakened. . . . A narrow street, yoked bullocks and the clamour of a Latin city. . . . (111)

The scent is of the chestnuts Conchita is roasting, implying that this memory is of the Spanish city of her past. The narrator feels that this picture "stood behind the English country as a ghostly stranger behind a familiar form . . . this was the ghost of which Malory had always been conscious" (112). Since the "ghost" that haunted Malory was embodied in Conchita, this vision implicitly draws Malory, the narrator, and the Spanish gypsy together as well as reflecting on the impassioned violence between Ruth and Rawdon. That Malory's presence is linked to a Spanish city also hints at his gypsylike wanderings, his alienation from and desire for England and Englishness, mirroring Sackville-West's own ambiguous attraction to rural England.[11] The narrator too is akin to this "ghostly stranger," given that he himself is haunting these scenes of Malory's past life.[12] Furthermore, the narrator associates his vision with his tentative expression of love for Malory one page later, linking the uncanny presence of the Spanish gypsy in English country life to homoerotic desire. What both Malory and the narrator sensed in the strangeness of the Pennistans' farm was not simply Ruth's affinity to gypsiness but their own attraction toward and identification with her heritage. Their unease, and the association between both of them and the figure of the gypsy, suggest their uncertainty about their roles in this plot of triangulation, in which their confused desires for Ruth mark a way of negotiating their potential interest in each other.[13] Once more, the Spanish gypsy provides a figure for these alluring, contradictory desires, as the passionate heterosexuality atrributed to Ruth is associated with a more unsettling passion.

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Sackville-West had a number of male and female lovers in the 1920s and before, some of whom played on her gypsiness. Glendinning cites Rosamund Grosvenor referring to her as "Carmen" (31), for example, and Geoffrey Scott writing to her, "My gypsy, keep my love" (137). But not until her friendship with Virginia Woolf, it seems, did the gypsy once more became part of a playful private dialogue. Woolf evidently responded to the gypsy figure as an image for desire between women. In one letter to Sackville-West, describing a party, she writes:

> Bobo Mayer is a great seducer in her way. She has gypsy blood in her—she's rather violent and highly coloured, sinuous too,

> with a boneless body, and thin hands; all the things I like. So, being a little tipsy about twelve o'clock at night, I let her do it.
>
> She cut my hair off. I'm shingled. . . . (*Letters* 330)

With its implications that Woolf has met another attractive woman with "gypsy blood," the letter is designed to make Sackville-West jealous, yet at the same time it potentially assures her of Woolf's affection by including this gypsiness in "all the things I like." The suggestion of seduction in "I let her do it"—note Woolf's dramatic pause before telling Sackville-West what exactly she means—is directly related to Mayer's gypsy character. And although shingled hair was wildly popular in the period, it still seems to have connoted rejection of traditional relationships. Ackland, for instance, defiantly had her hair shingled on her wedding day, only revealing it to her husband after the ceremony (Harman 104). Woolf's letter affectionately links this transgression to Sackville-West, continuing, "'Vita's at the bottom of your shingling, I know' Vanessa writes in a wild fury. . . . You shall ruffle my hair in May, Honey" (331).

Woolf's interest in Sackville-West's gypsy blood is both obliquely and directly referenced in *Orlando,* a text which, of course, draws on Sackville-West's life and on her account of her love for Trefusis. In 1927, when Woolf was planning *Orlando,* she envisioned it as "an escapade; the spirit to be satiric, the structure wild" (*Diary* 168). *Orlando* itself, that is, is a form of escape from novelistic conventions, perhaps even a gypsylike text in that it is adventurous, marginal, playful, and defiant. When Orlando changes sex, the gypsies are the first people she turns to: in a new and uncertain mode of existence, she allies herself with them. Rachel Bowlby observes that these gypsies "intriguingly . . . do not make any apparent (visible) distinction between the sexes" (168), and Karen Lawrence reads them both as androgynous and as raising the possibility of "polymorphous sexuality" through their orientalism (271). The gypsies are also important, I would add, because their gypsiness in itself could slyly indicate that Orlando's desires might not be normatively heterosexual. Orlando, temporarily outcast from her society and in a liminal state, is not simply staying with the gypsies, she is akin to them:

> The gypsies, with whom it is obvious that she must have been in secret communication before the revolution, seem to have looked upon her as one of themselves . . . and her dark hair and dark complexion bore out the belief that she was, by birth, one

> of them and had been snatched by an English Duke from a nut tree when she was a baby. (136)

The "revolution" could refer to Orlando's change of sex as well as to the political revolution she escaped. Did her communication with the gypsies and her marriage as a man to a gypsy woman somehow contribute to the change of sex, or to the ease with which she accepts it? The story of the stolen gypsy baby here mimics and reverses the popular narrative of the stolen aristocrat who grows up as a gypsy: in this version, gypsy heritage is the more desirable of the two.

As Orlando's attitude toward the gypsies gradually alters, Woolf hints that she is reverting to class and type by perceiving her natural and human surroundings as unquenchably romantic. Orlando moves back into the position of poet, but she also becomes an anthropologist, surveyor of gypsy life rather than unquestioning participant, and in this she starts to assume the "civilized" attitude toward gypsies held by many of Woolf's contemporaries. In the growing disillusion between Orlando and the gypsies, Woolf sees through Sackville-West's gypsy fantasies with irony and accuracy.[14] Yet a later, concealed allusion to gypsies and Sackville-West plays on these fantasies. When Orlando becomes a twentieth-century poet, the words that emerge from her pen are quoted from Sackville-West's poem *The Land:*

> And then I came to a field where the springing grass
> Was dulled by the hanging cups of fritillaries,
> Sullen and foreign-looking, the snaky flower,
> Scarfed in dull purple, like Egyptian girls— (252)

At this point the censoring "power" that Orlando feels "reading over her shoulder" intervenes. "Girls?" it questions. "Are girls necessary? You have a husband at the Cape, you say? Ah, well, that'll do" (253). The obvious implication is that the censor is checking for symptoms of lesbianism—and the reason why these lines are suspicious is not simply because of the "girls" but because they are "Egyptian," gypsies. Julie Abraham, who uses this passage to open her argument about lesbian narratives, suggests that the censor is happy because

> It has one less lesbian reference to deal with, not because Orlando has stopped writing or because a particular sentence has been censored, but because, if the "girls" can be neutralized by

> their author's class, her position within imperial structures, and her marriage, Orlando's poem need not be interpreted as lesbian. (xii)

This acute comment could apply not only to Orlando but to Sackville-West herself: her own marriage, class, and status as Nicolson's wife meant that moments such as this in *The Land* were not widely perceived as lesbian. Yet Woolf's allusion is surely also a sly reference directed to those (like Sackville-West) who know that the censor's satisfaction is illusory and would pick up on the implications both of "girls" and of "Egyptian." In *The Land,* this passage continues:

> Camping among the furze, staining the waste
> With foreign colour, sulky-dark and quaint,
> Dangerous too, as a girl might sidle up,
> An Egyptian girl, with an ancient snaring spell,
> Throwing a net, soft round the limbs and heart,
> . . . .
> A gypsy Judith, witch of a ragged tent. (49)

In Orlando's first literary production of the twentieth century, she harks back to her first experiences as a woman and writes not only about nature but about gypsies. Their imagined encampment in *The Land* "stains"—pollutes the safe, ordered English countryside with possibilities of sexual enticement, foreignness, and witchcraft. Sackville-West's description hovers between quaintness and menace, as though the gypsies are about to be dismissed as "foreign colour," a charming tourist attraction, when their presence suddenly becomes fraught with threat. As the pace of the lines quickens in the double dactyl ("Dángerous tóo, as a"), an effect heightened by the slight catch of breath on the comma, the narrator's investment in these gypsies starts to seem indeed a little dangerous. The identity of the girl's victim is deliberately left ambiguous ("sidle up" to whom?), but the impression is that the narrator vicariously participates in or enjoys this seduction. Woolf flirts with the suggestiveness of Sackville-West's poem, but she excludes it from the text, so that the specificity of this reference to gypsies—imagined encamped in an English field, not an Egyptian or Persian desert—would pass unnoticed by most readers, though not by Sackville-West herself.

One other, seldom discussed, text by Woolf engages significantly with gypsies: her unpublished short story "Gipsy, the Mongrel" (1940). Written for her agent, who requested a dog story, this brief sentimental narrative about the (male) narrator's affection for a dog makes a slightly unsettling link between love for a dog and love for a woman. Gipsy is

> a wretched little mongrel, a regular gipsies' dog, half fox terrier, half the lord knows what. . . . But she had—what d'you call it when you forgive a person a dozen times a day against your better judgment? Charm? Character? Whatever it was, she had that. (369)

The dog's charm makes her seem particularly feminine to the narrator. Eventually, Gipsy obeys the call of her heritage and runs away, apparently to join a band of passing gypsies:

> If she'd been a woman, you'd have said that some temptation was gradually overcoming her. There was something she tried to resist, but couldn't, something in her blood so to speak that was too strong for her. (377)

Gipsy, in this story, takes the place of the tragic gypsy heroines discussed earlier—as though their identification with their pet animals has been carried to the logical extreme. Gypsies once more stand for the forces outside domestication, the call of the wild. It may also be relevant, given Sackville-West's associations with gypsies, that Woolf associated her with dogs: Sackville-West presented Woolf with a dog, and their pet names for each other were canine. Sackville-West ruefully described Woolf's "acquisition" of her as "like buying a puppy in a shop and leading it away" (*Letters* 252), while Woolf, whose playful references to doglike affection sometimes allow her to express feelings that might not be stated openly, writes to her:

> These shabby mongrels are always the most loving, warm-hearted creatures. Grizzle and Virginia will rush down to meet you—they will lick you all over. (Woolf, *Letters* 253)

Woolf's brief, light story, written late in her career, about affection for a gypsy creature that cannot settle down in tame life, may again be haunted by earlier allusions to desire between women.

Gypsies and Lesbian Desire: Sackville-West, Trefusis, and Woolf

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In Sylvia Townsend Warner's poem "An Afternoon Call," from her 1925 collection *The Espalier,* she describes how a gypsy woman intrudes into the home of a female poet:

> I bade her in. With glances keen
> She eyed my well-found kitchen, scene
> Of kind domestic arts;
> Like one who curious and serene
> Looks round on foreign parts. (12)

Under the challenging gaze of the gypsy the domestic starts to seem foreign, and the poet becomes slightly uncomfortable. The tone of "kind domestic arts" might be either defensive or ironic, as "kind" is an unsettling word in a poem that obliquely questions whether the poet might be more akin to a gypsy than to the kindly comforts of home. In Trefusis's version of this encounter, it was the middle-class woman who was "serene"; here, the gypsy's serenity suggests that from her perspective, domesticity is an entertaining place to visit, but not a particularly desirable choice. Warner, unlike Trefusis, acknowledges that her class and status mean that she will never be a gypsy, but there is a sense of wistful fellow-feeling here, recognition of a shared waywardness, as the poet gives this traveler some boots, in the last lines, so that she may "wander on" (12). As a woman poet (one who will soon be caught up in a lesbian relationship), Warner acknowledges that she will always have a touch of the gypsy.

The gypsy, here as in many texts from this period, undoes social conventions (she is not a polite afternoon caller) and acts as a wake-up call, inspiring self-conscious reflection on choices and possibilities. Her call is particularly alluring to women writers seeking to invent or claim a space for desire between women, to express alienation from conventional society, to escape "civilized" boundaries and court difference. She opens up possibilities of escape and freedom, and her links to performativity and exaggerated self-representation suggest the potential to see sexuality in terms of "styles rather than life-styles, as fictions rather than facts of life" (Halberstam, "F2M" 210–11). But there is also a troubling side to this identification with the gypsy, one that recognizes that the similarities between the roles of female gypsy and lesbian are not necessarily enabling. In British culture and beyond, fictional gypsies may have been seen as romantic Bohemian artists, but real gypsies were often regarded as dangerous foreigners, notable for criminality. Lombroso famously classified gypsies in the late nineteenth century as inherently degenerate types, "the living example of a whole race of criminals" (39), and of course they were to be a prime target of Nazi racial policy. In the first two decades of the century, both the gypsy and the lesbian became topics of discussion in law as well as literature, and as the century progressed, both were increasingly subject to various forms of social control.

In 1992, Bonnie Zimmerman writes that the lesbian "functions as excess within the heterosexual economy" and "positions herself outside these institutions, or creates space within them" (4). In this view the lesbian is a radical figure, reshaping societal structures. At the start of the century, however, Trefusis, Sackville-West, and Woolf recognized that lesbian desire could result in *being* positioned outside institutions, whether by choice or not. In their representations and others from this period, the gypsy, who both chooses to remain marginal and is consigned to that position, suggests an ambiguity about the desirability of seeking escape and exile versus the possibility of being consigned to it. The romantic outlaw, as Trefusis, for one, found, could all too easily shade into the persecuted outcast.

In this particular historical moment, various perceptions of gypsy life, dress, behavior, and sexuality came together to construct the gypsy as a figure rich in potential for women writers who sought to convey the complexities of lesbian desire. The decades between 1910 and 1930 mark a moment when gypsy culture was perhaps more discussed than at any point before or since. Still, it seems that a submerged discourse of the queer gypsy still haunts popular fictions of lesbian identity. In 1989, for instance, the *Evening Standard* commented on Jeannette Winterson:

> Lock up your wives and daughters—rumour has it that many a well-heeled lady cared no more for the marital bed when this gipsy came to her door. (qtd. in Hinds 156)

From the start of the century to near its close, it appears, the gypsy stands as an uneasy counterpart to the lesbian writer, an image for and of her desires, a strange yet familiar likeness.

Notes

1. I use *lesbian* throughout in the commonsense way defended by Terry Castle: to describe women whose "emotional and erotic allegiance" is to their own sex (15).

2. The classic discussion of the trope of the mannish lesbian is in Newton. See also both works by Halberstam.

3. On women's fashions of this period, see Steele.

4. For a good exposition of the links between orientalism and camp in the 1920s, see Boxwell.

5. This heroine, Jacqueline, also speaks Romany and reminds the hero of "the Gitana dancer he had seen at Cadiz" (Gibbon 92–93).

6. Charnon-Deutsch (228–30) has a valuable discussion of how this trope also operates in European literature and film during this period, particularly in Spain.

7. The trial centered around the question of whether Lionel Sackville-West had legally married Pepita. For a full account, see Nicolson.

8. See Bercovici (*Story* 1) and Hancock for an account of popular notions of Romany.

9. Accounts of the Sackville-West/Trefusis relationship frequently emphasize those passages where Trefusis pictures Sackville-West as a man or where Vita cross-dresses as Julian: Garber, for instance, argues that Trefusis "set free the 'boy' in her" (413).

10. See Thompson 115.

11. Raitt makes a similar point by noting that Malory's marginalization by society mirrors that of the gypsies in the encampment (50–51).

12. This account of *Heritage* is informed by Castle's discussion of the metaphorical "ghosting" of the lesbian, the way in which lesbian subtexts surface through the figure of the ghost.

13. An exploration of the possible associations between male homosexuality and gypsy masculinity lies outside the scope of this article, but it is worth noting that gypsy men, often portrayed as virile, passionate, and savage in relationships with women, were also commonly troped as effeminate, lacking in British manliness. As one author notes of a half-gypsy hero, "his face had too much beauty in it, for a man" ("Field" 205). D. H. Lawrence's gypsy in "The

Virgin and the Gipsy," "one of the black, loose-bodied, handsome sort" (19), is partly a sexual predator but still seems lacking in power and authority in comparison to his "big, swarthy, wolf-like" (30) gypsy woman.

14. For an account of how the representation of gypsies in *Orlando* might have been influenced by Sackville-West's writing on Persia, see Bazargan 47.

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James Merrill's Manners and Elizabeth Bishop's Dismay

Luke Carson

Alison Lurie's impression of James Merrill on first meeting him was that he "seemed both coolly detached and awkwardly self-conscious. . . . He appeared to have read everything and, worse, to be surprised at our ignorance" (6). As Merrill matured, she writes, he

> became kinder, more generous, and more sympathetic. He never quite became an ordinary person, but his instinctive scorn of fools, once only half-concealed by good manners, relaxed and gave way to a detached, affectionate amusement, such as a highly civilized visitor from another planet might feel. (7)

Since the politeness of a bemused alien among human fools would satisfy no one's criteria for manners that are not merely polite, Lurie's portrait of Merrill's maturity is hardly flattering. It raises the question of the relationship between Merrill's detachment, his affection, and his amusement. Do his manners transform his scorn, or do they simply "relax" it? Does Merrill mature, or was he simply well brought up? Since, according to Merrill, "It's hard to imagine a work of literature that doesn't depend on manners" (*Recitative* 33), the question of manners bears also on style, which Stephen Yenser rightly calls the "literary allotrope" of manners (58).

For Merrill, Wallace Stevens's work exemplifies the "poem of manners" because of his inclination to "present the world through, say, a character's intelligence or lack of it" (*Recitative* 32). Such first-person enactments of "social behavior" are "more hospitable to irony, self-expression, self-contradiction, than many a philosophical or sociological system" or the "descriptions of social behavior" that according to Merrill inform Eliot's work (33). The qualities of "tone or voice" that Merrill values are evident in Marcel, the narrator of *In Search of Lost Time:* "The real triumph of manners in Proust is the extreme courtesy toward the reader. . . . Proust says to us in effect, 'I will not patronize you by treating these delicate matters with less than total, patient, sparkling seriousness'" (33). Marcel's voice restores to the social graces of the Proustian salon, so easily pressed into the service of flattery and aggression, the moral function of demonstrating respect.

To align manners and morals as Merrill does is to challenge the familiar claim that manners are essentially practices of exclusion and inclusion, social strategies of power and distinction. This is an important issue in reading Merrill because of the perception that his work, as Donald Sheehan puts it in a 1967 interview with him, seems to reflect "a more or less unified social world" constituted by "taste, intelligence, and manners rather than class or family" (qtd. in Merrill, *Recitative* 32). Merrill's imagination of the social world is notoriously hierarchical in appearance, and in *The Changing Light at Sandover* becomes unabashed in its appeal to the spiritually elite world constituted by the poem's "circles of the brilliant and creative" (383). And the kind of friendship Merrill's style inclines toward is indeed based on small partialist communities of friends rather than on a more democratic and impartialist notion of respect.[1] In this essay, then, I will examine Merrill's concern with manners in order to discover if manners, and therefore style, are ultimately aligned with a certain moral substance, or if they are essentially strategies of social distinction that serve to mark group membership. At stake in this question is the extent to which an ethical claim is asserted by Merrill's association of manners with style: just as politeness without moral substance would be merely aesthetically pleasing, so might a pleasing literary style be merely "ornamental" (*Recitative* 32) or "elegant," a charge frequently aimed at Merrill, to which he replies with a polite "shrug" (33).

One story in Merrill's memoir *A Different Person* narrates the birth in his teens and twenties of his "opera-going self" (112), whose manners and style were representative of a generation of economically privileged gay men who were educated in the private schools and colleges of the American Northeast. This story, which Merrill tells with some critical bemusement, is in tension with another story, one of vocation, maturation, and individuation: his becoming not so much someone different from his group identities and affiliations but a person whose difference is that of an individuated self. The most important figure in this story is Elizabeth Bishop, a "female role model" (141) more important than the operatic divas from whom he learned a representative gay style. Though Merrill does not tell that story in his memoir, Bishop's own reflections on the relationship between manners and morals suggest a number of ways in which Bishop as role model may have helped Merrill. In his tribute to Bishop, "Overdue Pilgrimage to Nova Scotia," in his final collection, *A Scattering of Salts,* Merrill dramatizes the relationship of manners and morals by representing his visit to Bishop's childhood village as an occasion on which his manners are challenged to prove themselves as more than mere politeness, as having moral substance. Though he attempts to pay "tribute" (*Poems* 667) to Bishop in a manner that would not cause her "dismay," Merrill's urbanity contrasts so strongly with the social world of Great Village and rural Nova Scotia that it is difficult for him to imagine the place and its inhabitants without a condescension that would indeed likely dismay Bishop. Merrill concludes his tribute by acknowledging this failure—but this acknowledgment is itself a form of tribute to what he has attempted to learn from Bishop's example.

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Telling the story of his upbringing and maturation in *A Different Person,* Merrill considers characters in terms of what he learned from their manners and style. Central to this story is the "child's need for a female role model, lacking whom, conceivably, the grown man's psyche or anima (always envisioned as feminine) might well remain pinched and mean" (141). Apart from his mother, whom I will consider shortly, one of his most important role models in the memoir is Mina Diamantopoulis, whom he meets when visiting Kimon Friar in Greece in 1950. In Mina, Merrill "recognize[s] the upbringing that marked [them both] as deeply as any tribal scarification": she "had learned from her tutor in St. Petersburg . . . the same French and German courtesies" that his "beloved Mademoiselle" had tried to teach him when he was a child (22).

During the previous winter, Mina had fallen in love with Kimon, who, being gay, did not reciprocate. The two managed to overcome their ordeal by "drawing upon all the experience, irony, and compassion at their command" (23). Because of her similar upbringing, it is Mina in particular who enables Merrill to envision how his manners—particularly the "lightness of tone" (22) he shares with Mina, which contrasts with Kimon's "tragic view of life"—might serve the moral purpose of salvaging relationships between persons. Mina and Merrill, "however [they] might rail at the given moment, counted on its being seemlier to shrug and smile." In this new family romance, Mina also revises the meaning of manners that Merrill had learned from his mother. After the divorce from Charles Merrill, Grace Merrill tries to keep her son, who "wanted nothing to do with him" (150), in the good graces of his father. Merrill figures himself as a young courtier sent to serve on behalf of his mother as well as his own advancement: "If my manners and appearance gave satisfaction at court, so much the better: this showed *her* in a good light too" (150). However, Merrill draws attention to the ironic consequence of this strategy when he attributes homosexual "style" to "the manners of our divorced mothers at the bridge table or at dinners where it behooved them to sparkle" (219).

In these brief narratives touching on his upbringing, Merrill tells the story of becoming "a different person," but he aligns his difference with his generation of gay men who were brought up by their mothers. However, becoming a person different from the cultural norm is only part of becoming a different person, and identifying one's style or manners as characteristic of a generation does not mark the difference of individuation. By representing his manners and style in terms of court flattery, Merrill suggests also that the style reflects a system of erotic and financial patronage that makes it difficult to really become a different person. Merrill does not respond to this difficulty, however, by rejecting the world of manners or the father's court, but like the divorced mothers who need to sparkle, he turns his upbringing into dramatic performance. Thus the fashioning of what becomes the self by which he lives his life is inseparable from the emergence of his "opera-going self." Merrill writes that "opera was from the start an education less musical than sentimental" (113). His identification with the main female characters of opera, he suggests, led to "dreams of immolation and all-consuming love" (115). Reflecting on his youthful identifications, he writes:

> Such dreams die hard. "I want this to cost everything," Claude remembers my telling him during our courtship. . . . At fifteen—at twenty-five, for that matter—I trusted suffering to improve the style, the lover's loss to be the artist's gain. Don't I still? (113)

Merrill's subsequent exploration of the relationship between theatricality and desire, art and life, suggests that the answer is both yes and no. But in his account of opera going he suggests that his sentimental education had not only to do with identification. "During performances," he writes, "my eye kept straying to row upon row of us, blank-faced in stagelight, inert, waiting to be moved" (112). Merrill's eye is on the stage, but at the same time on members of the audience who are themselves actors, "blank-faced in stagelight." Merrill has just cited Tonio's warning to the audience in *Pagliacci* "that a powerful story is about to be enacted, and not to mistake its interpreters for bloodless puppets." Merrill stages his own discovery that it is not the actors but "We [who] were the puppets"—waiting, like the marionettes he would abandon upon discovering opera, for someone else to make them expressive. The implications of this discovery require that he revise his understanding of the relationship between actor and person, between the fictional and the genuine, between art and life. At the center of these reflections will be his mother, from whom he learned lessons about behavior that have important consequences for art as well as for what he calls "day-to-day living" (141).

Merrill suggests that his mother had often been accused of being theatrical in the expression of her emotional life. On her behalf, and implicitly also on his own behalf, Merrill suggests that art and life—or, as he will put it in this italicized section of his memoir, stage and home—converge at the point of "strong" and "genuine feeling": "If, as my mother might have said in her own defense, genuine feeling kept one's responses from being dismissed as 'dramatic,' so did artistry" (114). While his mother's argument concerns life and not art, Merrill extends its implications to the emotional life of art. If "dramatic" operatic emotion is a product of "the strictest training," it is no less genuine than "genuine feeling," since genuine feeling is itself "modeled" in imitation of others, whether those others are opera divas and their characters or one's mother.[2]

Merrill's "opera-going self," which "was born . . . during the summer (1937) my parents separated" (112), plays its role as diva when his mother has him read his father's "letter saying that he was leaving her." Merrill found himself "inspired (at eleven) to let it flutter from [his] fingers to the carpet. 'Oh, don't be dramatic,' said [his] mother with some asperity," implying that his feeling is not genuine, but merely acted. While Tonio warns us to have the right relationship to the actors on stage (they are not "bloodless puppets"), Merrill suggests that this is what he needs to learn of life: that the feelings his mother undergoes cannot simply be assumed and acted out by him through imitation or identification. The story Tonio warns us of is figuratively, in this passage, the story of Merrill's broken home, with his mother as main character and diva. Merrill has, in effect, identified with his mother's role, and Tonio's warning, he says, "put things in perspective":

> Just as a child cannot dream of attaining the depth of the woman's feeling as she detaches herself from his arms and goes—like the heartsick clown in Mrs. Longone's synopsis [of *Pagliacci*]—to powder her face at the mirror, so we in the audience must feel less than the actors do; it is as simple as that. Strong feelings are the stuff of art. They belong not in the home but on stage. (112–13)

In this section Merrill entwines art and life, an operatic story and the story of his mother and father, to the point of indistinction. As the ambiguous pronouns suggest, Merrill as a child must learn that he "cannot dream of attaining the depth of [his mother's] feeling. He learns what it means to be in the audience rather than to identify with the character on stage or the person before him.

If "strong feelings are the stuff of art" and do not belong in the "home," it does not follow that one's life will not have moments of art and that one's home cannot on occasion contain a stage. When one experiences strong feeling in life, one becomes an actor in this sense, as life and art meet. For Merrill this relationship between artistry and genuine feeling acknowledges that human tempers are products of "the strictest training." Identification with the actor or the imitation of another person as a role model is necessary to learning "how to attack one's own high notes" (114), how to express feeling. Merrill writes that "Art honored both the reticence my mother recommended in life and her right—or mine, if it came to that—to fall to the floor when nothing else availed." Art and the stage are not a realm separate from "day-to-day living" but are contained within the life of feeling, which reaches points of strength that are unattainable to the audience, who "must feel less than the actors do." The claim that such strong feeling makes on another person, then, is one that cannot be answered by identification or imitation but only by a certain kind of distance—the distance of an audience—a claim that solicits not imitation but a response more akin to acknowledgment.

When Merrill writes that members of the audience at the opera, "row upon row of us"—a generation of boys learning how to become gay men—were only able to learn such things as he learned because "our mothers had paid for us" (113), he also hints that their mothers were, like Merrill's, the heroines of dramas of separation and abandonment, and paid what Merrill twice in these brief reflections calls the "cost" of experience (113, 115). The lover's loss might be the artist's gain, but the original loss is experienced by another, particularly by the mother, "as she detaches herself from his arms"—her child's or her husband's arms—"and goes . . . to powder her face at the mirror." This gesture of renunciation or resignation expresses what Merrill calls "a mother's dignity in the face of rejection" (140). But he is careful in his renditions of this moment of separation to leave ambiguous how and why it happens. While the ambiguity of the pronoun allows that it is either the child or the father and husband who leaves the mother, it may be that the mother "detaches herself from [the] arms" of the son, who would seem still to be clinging, in order to let him become a person. The narrative of separation is not always one of rejection but is also one of letting go.

This narrative emerges again in the same section of the memoir. In *Der Rosenkavalier*—which, Merrill writes, "had all but made me who I was" (115)—an older woman "detaches herself from [the] arms" of her younger lover in a way that allows her to maintain her "dignity in the face of rejection." His memories of Lotte Lehmann's performance as the Marschallin, Merrill writes, "helped [him] to smile and shrug through the worst. Here was a bittersweet, faintly homosexual, wholly survivable alternative to [his] dreams of immolation and all-consuming love." The Marschallin's shrug is a "survivable alternative" to the gestures adopted by, for example, Chester Kallman, who "had modeled himself in boyhood upon the Wrong Soprano—on Zinka Milanov, say, with her queenly airs and clutch-and-dagger reflexes" (114). The Marschallin's shrug makes it possible not only for her to detach herself and retain her dignity but also to return to "day-to-day living," to experience informed by "bittersweet" loss.

Yet as the shrug allows Merrill to sustain an identification with the diva and the heroine, it remains within the category of art. It is theatrical without being "dramatic" in the pejorative sense intended by Merrill's mother. If Merrill were to shrug in his personal life, one might not feel that the gesture was theatrical or dramatic; nonetheless, it would retain a private meaning and affect sustained by his identification with the diva.[3] While the shrug is a gesture of renunciation, it is also a performance that maintains dignity. The performance requires an audience that can perceive that dignity, just as Merrill perceived the Marschallin's dignity and made it an object of desire for himself—and so imitated the shrug. The Marschallin's gesture, in fact, might be seen as the only way in which an aging diva can retire from the stage with dignity and pass on the status of object of desire to the younger woman, or younger diva, while at the same time retaining her greatness.

That Merrill's response to the Marschallin is informed by his own diva desires becomes apparent when his lover has a very different understanding of her shrug:

> Certain doubts arose belatedly when I took Peter Hooten to that opera, which had all but made me who I was, only to see him unconvinced by the Marschallin's "self-sacrifice." He blazed out at her, as we walked home, like a young Chenier or Cavaradossi attacking the corrupt regime. Manipulative, narcissistic—who could swallow such a woman? (115)

Hooten may as well be saying that the Marschallin is being "dramatic," that her performance is not redeemed by "genuine feeling." The real object of Hooten's attack, Merrill realizes, is "certain aspects of [Merrill's] relationship to him, with its own dramatic age difference and offstage Feldmarschall (David Jackson), whose prior claims made the young Octavian's position so intolerable" (115). He listens to Hooten "without shrugging" and in that moment of restraint feels "what it had cost the Marschallin to shrug." What it cost her is measured by what she renounces with that gesture in exchange for "dignity in the face of rejection": the theatricality underwritten by "dreams of immolation and all-consuming love" and the gratification to narcissism that her youthfulness made it easier to acquire. The gesture acknowledges her transformation into aging diva and heroine.

Why does Merrill not shrug? As Hooten attacks the Marschallin, he is also attacking Merrill, who discovers that he has been implicitly identified with the aging diva with whom he identified as a young man. His impulse to shrug confirms the identification, but he refuses to step on stage as the Marschallin. Although his exchange with Hooten is not a scene of rejection, Merrill's impulse indicates his dramatic role as aging lover. The attack exposes the possibility that Merrill's own shrugs, with which Hooten was likely familiar, might simply be a performance for an audience that can acknowledge the maturity and dignity they attempt to signify, and that his occulted theatricality has been exposed by another, more skeptical audience. The gesture of the aging lover, like the gesture of the aging diva, may simply transform "dreams of immolation and all-consuming love" to dreams of dignity.

Nonetheless, though he refrains from shrugging, Merrill inwardly maintains that "[t]he hold of art wasn't to be broken that easily" (115). He still feels the shrug would be proper but recognizes that it might seem offensive and dismissive—perhaps even cruel. In this account of his restraint, however, Merrill nonetheless shrugs to his audience, his readers, and acknowledges that he does so at Hooten's expense. Merrill allows us to see that his apparent respect for Hooten's feelings amounts to no more than mere politeness. He feels the hold of art at the moment he withholds what he feels is the gesture that belongs. Moreover, the gesture is called for in two senses: first by the aesthetic criteria of art, which are satisfied by the Marschallin's shrug; second, and more important, by the moral criterion of respect and friendship. If Hooten were his equal in these matters, Merrill could have shrugged, and the gesture would make both a moral and an aesthetic claim. Merrill, in this situation, is the grown-up. The problem with this particular alignment of manners and morals is that the moral sensitivity Merrill displays in his restraint amounts to no more than politeness because Hooten has violated the implicit rules of behavior that must be followed if one is to command the respect of others within a community defined by aesthetic criteria of behavior. Hooten places himself outside a community of those who would appreciate Merrill's shrug, which is also a community of those who would understand the Marschallin's shrug. The shrug signifies "the hold of art" because it is a minimal theatrical display, an expressive reticence. It signifies maturity and experience by expressing one's ability to refrain from "fall[ing] to the floor when nothing else availed."

These are among the reasons the Marschallin's shrug "turned out [not] to be much of a help in day-to-day living" (141). Merrill implicitly holds out for the possibility that "the hold of art" can be qualified by a moral purpose not dependent on the aesthetic criteria that constitute a small community of insiders. Rather than Mina or the Marschallin, it is Elizabeth Bishop whom Merrill identifies as the "female role model" who taught him about not only the art but the ethics that can attempt to align manners and morals so that their overlapping criteria cannot only be satisfied in "the right company" identified by the "tribal scarification" of its upbringing (22). Rather than being "theatrical" in the operatic sense, Bishop managed "life-long impersonations of an ordinary woman" (*Recitative* 121) that provided Merrill with an example of a morally respectable selfhood that contrasts with the "opera-going self" and its performances.

In "A Class Day Talk," Merrill affiliates Bishop with the social world of which he is a member by citing a letter to Anne Stevenson in which Bishop identifies herself as a snob among other snobs:

> I think snobbery governs a good deal of my taste. I've been lucky in having had some witty friends—and I mean real wit, quickness, wild fancies, remarks that make one cry with laughing. . . . (qtd. in *Recitative* 162)

Simultaneously, as if to draw attention to the danger of identifying oneself in terms of such a small social world, Merrill notes that in "another letter to the same person" Bishop identifies herself as one of a group of barbarians: "I think we are still barbarians, barbarians who commit a hundred indecencies and cruelties every day of our lives . . ." (162). In juxtaposing these two passages from different letters, Merrill aligns the group of "witty friends" with the "we" who are identified as barbarians, suggesting that the snobbery entailed by membership in the community of friends is affiliated with a barbarian cruelty and indecency that manifests itself "every day of our lives" in episodes like the small cruelty of Merrill's patronizing attitude toward Peter Hooten. Though he and Bishop share aesthetic criteria for what constitutes friendship, Merrill identifies in Bishop's work an acute sensitivity to "[t]he threat of human indecency and cruelty" that "can be felt always between her lines" (162). In his obituary of her, Merrill tells a story that exemplifies not only Bishop's moral sensitivity, which is a concomitant of respect, but also her "gift to be simple": prisoners in Brazil were able to talk to her quietly, "like an old friend who would understand" (122).

Bishop herself struggled with the question of the relationship between manners and morals, understanding manners as Merrill does to be the form in which the moral quality of respect is expressed. Her notes for a review of Marianne Moore's work reveal Bishop's admiration of Moore's "absolute refusal to differentiate between people at all":

> I don't think I've ever really given her enough credit for her *democracy*—being put off by the tediousness of her politeness, etc. . . . If her manners are too ceremonious, at least they are equally so for "Gladys," "Tom," (TSE), or the elevator man. I wish I could quote Pascal's remark exactly, about how all men are *not* counted equal but it is spiritual death if we don't behave as if they were. (qtd. in Goldensohn 152)

Just as Bishop tries to learn something of democratic manners from Moore, Merrill tries to learn the meaning of manners from Bishop. Indeed, in "Self-Portrait in a Tyvek Windbreaker," to express what he learns, Merrill turns to Bishop's summary of Pascal: "For while all humans aren't / Countable as equals, we must behave / As if they were, or the spirit dies (Pascal)" (*Poems* 671).[4]

Merrill's poem dramatizes the very problem that concerned Bishop and Pascal. Merrill represents himself as a superior outsider who, dressed down in a Tyvek windbreaker with a world map on it, is mistaken for "Everyman . . . the whole world's pal!" Not recognizing that his green "terry-cloth headband" is the laurel that distinguishes him as a poet, people on the street, to his veiled horror, hail him familiarly. A "smiling-as-if-I-should-know-her teenager," also wearing a windbreaker, waves at him, and though he doesn't welcome the wave he returns it "Like an accomplice." His good manners have no substance, however, as his Pascalian imperative for reciprocating the greeting makes clear: we must behave as if others are our equals, though we know they are not. Merrill cannot quite make himself treat the people on the street reciprocally as equals, and his scorn, which is perceptible, leads him to question whether there is such a thing as "we": "'We'? A few hundred decades . . . / / Between us and the red genetic muck" doesn't make for an "Everyman."[5]

Merrill's tribute to Bishop, "Overdue Pilgrimage to Nova Scotia," appears only a few pages before "Self-Portrait in a Tyvek Windbreaker" in *A Scattering of Salts.* Indeed, Merrill's final collection turns repeatedly to Bishop, as if to take the measure of the lessons he learned from the female role model who ought to have helped his anima prevent him from becoming "pinched and mean" (*Different Person* 141). Before considering Merrill's tribute, however, I will consider in more detail how Bishop struggled with the question of manners and morals in her work.

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In "Efforts of Affection," Bishop reflects on "the unaccustomed deference [and] the exquisitely prolonged etiquette" (*Prose* 156) of Marianne Moore and her mother. Trying to summarize these reflections at the end of her memoir, she famously becomes "foolishly bemused," and has "a sort of subliminal glimpse of the capital letter *M* multiplying," spelling out

> Marianne's monogram; mother; manners; morals; and I catch myself murmuring, "Manners and morals; manners *as* morals? Or is it morals *as* manners?" Since like Alice, "in a dreamy sort of way," I can't answer either question, it doesn't much matter which way I put it; it *seems* to be making sense. (156)

Bishop's bemusement is apparent in the mixed tones of her memoir, which teases the Moores behind their backs for their anachronistic manners and morals. The memoir focuses on the idiosyncrasy and anachronism of the Moores' "*chinoiserie* of manners" (134) without really drawing any serious connection to their moral dimension; their exercise seems largely to be morally neutral, a genteel leftover of the past.

Bishop is nonetheless puzzled by the way in which the Moores treat manners as if they have a profound ethical significance in spite of what seems the moral neutrality of their code. One way in which Bishop explores the relationship of morals and manners is to draw attention to situations that are morally questionable. When Bishop first introduces the word *manners* into the memoir it is in connection with tennis, "the rules and conventions" of which, according to Bishop, Moore seemed to enjoy "as much as the sport. She engaged a young black boy to play with her," but "He was finally dismissed because of his lack of tennis manners; his worst offense seemed to be that instead of 'Serve!' he *would* say 'Okay!'" (131). This anecdote suggests that Bishop is aware of the power of the Moores' manners to distinguish insiders from outsiders. This parallels the story of the "very well known and polished writer [who] was never invited to Cumberland Street although his friends were" (137). When Bishop "asked innocently why [she] never saw him there . . . Marianne gave [her] her serious, severe look and said, 'He *contradicted* Mother.'"

In both of these stories, manners become a moral issue in a way that anticipates Bishop's puzzled conclusion to her memoir. However, neither story elicits our respect for the Moores' manners. To see contradicting

Mary Warner Moore as bad manners may simply reflect an arbitrary system of manners rather than a morally rooted one. Since we know neither their guest's tone of voice nor the topic of discussion, it is difficult to judge his behavior; it is possible, for example, that in his world of manners and morals, contradiction signals the respect we confer on others in conversation by acknowledging their ability to reason. While Bishop does not quite take sides, her tone suggests that the Moores' judgment can be merely idiosyncratic.

And yet there is a way in which manners as constituting a community is morally respectable. Bishop comments on the Moores' bowing to the elevator boy who, though

> unaccustomed to such civility . . . was very pleased and tried hard not to push his handle or close the doors as quickly as on the other floors. Elevator men, subway changemakers, ticket takers, taxi drivers—all were treated to these formalities, and, as a rule, they were pleasantly surprised and seemed to respond in kind. (136–37)

But considering that manners here, unlike morals, cost very little, it is difficult to say whether this example of civility has much moral substance, particularly when it is compared to the weight of moral substance brought to bear on the man who contradicted Mrs. Moore, and so found himself unwelcome in their home. While manners may constitute insiders and outsiders, some manners are welcoming and hospitable to others who are not friends. What are the tests one must pass in order to be welcomed with respect, as opposed to welcomed with mere politeness or turned away? How does one's code of manners allow for the acknowledgment of different manners, or the conferring of respect on strangers with strange customs?

Bishop implicitly raises such questions in her own treatment of the Moores, which attempts to be respectful even as their alignment of manners and morals seems to bewilder her and provide her only with amusing anecdotes at the expense of our taking the Moores' manners seriously. While she acknowledges that the Moores' manners and morals are anachronistic, Bishop nonetheless admits to finding them "still applicable and very moving" (155). But she can only express this feeling of respect indirectly, by citing a letter in which Gerard Manley Hopkins praises "the ideal of the 'gentleman'" at the expense of the artist—particularly the modern artist, whose work is prone, in Hopkins's words, to exhibiting "airs and affectations" (qtd. in Bishop, *Prose* 155): for Hopkins, the gentleman's manners, though they fall short of the good, protect virtue more capably than does the poet's aesthetic expression. Identifying herself with the moderns whom Hopkins criticizes, Bishop writes, "The word 'gentleman' makes us uncomfortable now, and its feminine counterparts, whether 'lady' or 'gentlewoman,' embarrass us even more" (155). Nonetheless, her invocation of Hopkins, whose ideas she acknowledges "may sound impossibly Victorian," allows her to voice the tone of moral respect that her memoir cannot bring itself to voice. The citation signals a different attitude to the Moores' manners: rather than simply bemused at the expense of the Moores, Bishop feels embarrassed and foolish.

Bishop's embarrassment has two sources. On the one hand, she identifies herself as a member of a younger generation who are embarrassed by their elders' beliefs. Her embarrassment, which she assumes her audience shares, is on someone else's behalf—someone who does not fit into the social circle in which Bishop includes herself: having brought Hopkins and the Moores into the company of her modern readership, Bishop apologizes behind their backs for their anachronistic beliefs. On the other hand, Bishop's "foolish" embarrassment reflects a lack of confidence in her own self-consciously modern manners and morals. The respect she voices through Hopkins is embarrassing because it is unmodern and may not command the respect of her audience. In the rhetorical gestures of bemused condescension in "Efforts of Affection," Bishop appeals to the figure of the precociously adult Alice, whose voice is echoed elsewhere in Bishop's work—particularly in the child's voice in "In the Waiting Room," whose attitude to her "foolish aunt" is one of superior bemusement and empathetic embarrassment, and who proudly points out that "[she] could read." Foolishness, however, or embarrassment on one's own behalf, requires another kind of child, one who is capable of a childlike respect rather than the precociously adult disrespect of the bemused Alice. This child is innocently inspired by the apparent goodness and innocence of the adults to whom she pays tribute.[6] Though little in the memoir seems to justify respect for the Moores' etiquette, something in their anachronistic manners elicits Bishop's faith in a way that parallels Hopkins's unembarrassed defense of the manners of the gentleman. Bishop admits the impression made on her by the Moores' manners by making herself into a child who has been taught—or rather inspired—to do good: "I never left Cumberland Street without feeling happier: uplifted, even inspired, determined to be good, to work harder, not to worry about what other people thought" (137). In figuring herself as a child in this way, however, Bishop realizes that she cannot expect her audience to share her respect, and the tone at the end of the memoir suggests embarrassment more than the urbane bemusement of the modern Bishop.

Bishop's memoir is troubled by the status of manners in the honorific sense—that is, manners as the civility purported to be a central achievement of the civilizing process.[7] The ambivalence of the memoir—poised between bemusement and embarrassment—also emerges in Bishop's poem "Manners." A tribute to her grandfather by "a Child of 1918," "Manners" rhetorically adopts Bishop's grandfather's code of manners in order to deal deferentially and courteously with the anachronistic social and moral life of Great Village circa 1918. The speaker's deferential tone works against a note of condescension and a sense of empathetic embarrassment (embarrassment on behalf of another), a feeling that her grandfather's manners are not worthy of the moral respect he implicitly claims for them. But if we consider William Empson's usefully general definition of pastoral—that "in pastoral you take a limited life and pretend it is the full and normal one" (115)—we can see that Bishop's pastoral, in spite of its attempt to pay homage to her grandfather, fails to pretend. The potential for embarrassment and foolishness on both sides is high, and the poem can barely restrain its condescending bemusement. Though the poem's manners, which edge toward the patronizing, do not pass the test of Proustian respect, its speaker, in spite of her attempt to assume an adult attitude of bemusement toward what is anachronistic and embarrassing, allows a childlike appreciation to remain audible. But that child still remains hidden from view, as if she were shy, too embarrassed to admit that she is, in the words of "In the Waiting Room," "one of *them*" (160).

The embarrassment I have been examining makes Bishop's speakers hesitant about any claims to an identity that is modern, mature, or urbane, and testifies to an identification with the anachronistic, the unmodern. Like her memoir, however, "Filling Station" provides evidence that Bishop is also capable of exploring the affects of disgust and contempt characteristic of the urban snob. This poem explores the inverse of the foolish embarrassment Bishop admits to in "Efforts of Affection" and concludes with a superior bemusement at the expense of the people whose way of life offends her sensibility. As Robert Dale Parker writes, the poem "begins abruptly in sudden and comically self-mocking squeamishness" (22). The conclusion, though, with its inclusive vision that "Somebody loves us all" (128), might seem to suggest that the poem overcomes its initial squeamishness. But in spite of the sense of self-mockery, the speaker is incapable of overcoming this class-based squeamishness. How generous is her "all"? The final line, as Parker notes, can be read "with a sarcastic accent on somebody, as if to admit wryly that maybe *somebody* is fool enough to love even this oil-soaked father and his greasy sons" (24).

The conclusion is unsettling rather than comforting to the speaker, who feels it to be a mysterious and even frightening thing that God loves these greasy people as well as herself—that God loves without making the distinctions that occur so strongly and suddenly to the speaker. The puzzled final line suggests displeasure or dismay at the sense that God does not see in me what I imagine would distinguish me for him. I am not of the elect: *"I"* am merely "one of *them."* "Filling Station" concludes with the petulance of a confident and spoiled child who is startled by how "thoroughly dirty" the station is (127). The theological sentiment is phrased in a tone of disbelief that discredits a sentimentalized God who would be "fool enough" to love "us all." The poem thus permits social distinction to stand forth as something not to be resolved by the inclusive vision of the final line. While in "Efforts of Affection" Bishop implicitly worries that the Moores' manners led them to make arbitrary and unjust social judgments disguised in moral terms, so that the tennis partner and the friend who contradicted Mrs. Moore suddenly find themselves unwelcome, "Filling Station" explores the difficulty of overcoming class-based revulsion and the bad faith of trying to hold to the moralistic truism that we are all equal in God's eyes.[8] Clearly there may be something in the Moores' enigmatic codes of manners and morals that Bishop may still find instructive.

§

Bishop's reflections on Moore's manners signal a trouble about equality, hierarchy, and distinction that emerges in "Filling Station" and elsewhere in her work. Just as Bishop returned again and again to the enigma of Moore's manners, Merrill posed the problem of morals and manners to himself through Bishop's example, as is suggested by his incorporating the allusion in Bishop's notebook to Pascal into his own reflections on democracy and manners in "Self-Portrait in a Tyvek Windbreaker" and by his reference in that poem to "oil-benighted creatures" (670), which calls up Bishop's "oil-soaked, oil-permeated" (127) filling station and the "oil-soaked" father and his "greasy sons."

In the opening line of "Overdue Pilgrimage to Nova Scotia," Merrill acknowledges the immense distance between the cosmopolitan tourist and the rural folk by admiring the artlessness of "the village," which "touched us by not knowing how" (666). There are small hints of his patronizing attitude to them, such as his tone when he sees that someone has built an Esso station in front of Bishop's childhood home: "facing where you lived, / Somebody's been inspired (*can* he have read / 'Filling Station'?)" (667). We can see Merrill incorporating the attitude of the speaker of "Filling Station": "Oh, but it is dirty!" (Bishop, *Poems* 127). We could rephrase Merrill's opening line much less sentimentally: "Your village touched us," but its touch was unclean; its artlessness moved us, but what we felt was a squeamish disgust. But a better word for the attitude that reflects this disgust may be *contempt*.

I use the word *contempt* because the poem hints strongly that Merrill's reaction to the villagers—for example, his Bishop-like response to the gas station—may have been apparent to them, or even that the villagers were not very welcoming to these visitors from away.[9] The poem hints that Merrill may have made this patronizing attitude explicit enough that it amounted to rudeness, whether conscious or not. At any rate, Merrill's several allusions to "Manners" and to "Filling Station" draw attention to how his manners seem to fall short in Great Village. This becomes apparent in the final lines, as Merrill describes himself and his companion saying farewell to the village with a "gush of nothings" worthy of a postcard: "We're off—Excuse our dust! With warm regards" (667). The allusion to "Filling Station" suggests that he's driving one of that poem's "high-strung automobiles" (128), and the allusion to "Manners" identifies what in that poem makes the rural manners of Bishop's grandfather seem so absurdly out of place:

> When automobiles went by,
> The dust hid the people's faces,
> But we shouted 'Good day! Good day!
> Fine day!' at the top of our voices. (121)

Bishop and her grandfather shout out (and is it ever polite to shout?)

greetings that, however well intended, amount to a "gush of nothings" as the automobiles pass in dust. Evoking this scene, Merrill and his companion apologize for leaving the village in their dust.

Unlike Bishop in "Filling Station," Merrill allows the villagers to be seen seeing his act of judgment and, perhaps, seeing also the contempt underlying what Lurie calls "detached, affectionate amusement." While in "Filling Station" the family is present only through the objects that represent them, Merrill's villagers are made visible as a force of contempt strong enough to provoke his flight. Merrill's awkward manners, his "gush of nothings" as he drives off, are thus a last attempt to be polite in response to the impoliteness of the villagers. The word *dirty* in Merrill's poem, borrowed from "Filling Station," refers indirectly to the manners of the villagers, to hint that they responded to him, as if to what they perceive to be his contempt for them, with "many a dirty look" (667). At the end, Merrill drives off in a state of foolish bemusement: while he maintains his cosmopolitan aloofness, he is embarrassed by the failure of his manners, which did not mask his contempt, and thus sees that he has failed to offer homage to Bishop.

However, Merrill is also embarrassed by what the poem asks us to imagine would be Bishop's dismay at Merrill's bad behavior. Although the poem is careful to suggest Bishop's identification with the people for whom Merrill has involuntarily expressed contempt, he cannot quite bring himself to acknowledge that Bishop could see herself as "one of them." The first stanza hints that Bishop herself is a "self-belittling brilliant," too modest to have her brilliance openly acknowledged in a tribute such as Merrill's. Although he pays respect to Bishop's refusal "to tip the scale of being human," the poem hints that Bishop tends perhaps to be too "self-belittling" in claiming any kind of identity with the people of Great Village.

Attempting to locate Bishop in Great Village, to see her in her hometown, Merrill associates her with "the fair, soft-spoken girl" who shows him and his companion through a museum of "things [Bishop] would have known." Though Bishop had left Great Village in 1916, at the age of five, Merrill figures the girl as Bishop's contemporary, as if history had not happened in rural Nova Scotia: "She knows these things you would have known by heart," and all these things are "circa 1915, like the manners" of the girl. The difference between Bishop and the girl is further elided in the first line of the second stanza, in which "The child whose mother had been put away" could as well refer to the girl as to Bishop. "The child" is a figure for a Bishop who is remote from the one that Merrill knew, and the poem allows us to suspect that Merrill did not, as he claims, know Bishop "by heart." The figure of the child occupies a place where Bishop withdraws from Merrill's view by identifying herself with a group of people inaccessible to Merrill, and it is the discovery of this intraversible social distance that Merrill's poem dramatizes in terms of manners. If the manners of the villagers are, as Merrill suggests, "circa 1915," then presumably they are the manners identified in Bishop's "Manners," dedicated to "a Child of 1918." With the little girl who shows him through the museum, Merrill makes explicit the attitude of the speaker of Bishop's poem: rural manners are charming and quaint, but finally are embarrassingly anachronistic.

Merrill's tribute is permeated with the embarrassment and social anxiety that comes with assertions of hierarchical social difference. But the affect at the center of the poem, which it wants above all to avoid, is what it imagines as Bishop's "dismay." Merrill identifies the source of the dismay as Bishop's modesty: he risks overpraising her, "Add[ing] the weight" (667) to her work that she refused to add. However, Merrill's poem, with its muted comedy of social gaffes, offers more occasions of dismay than he openly acknowledges. It asks us to imagine Bishop's dismay not simply as offended modesty about her work's weightiness but as a more complex mix of embarrassment and disappointment, reflecting different social identifications.

First, the poem has the potential to dismay Bishop by embarrassing her on behalf of the villagers for whom Merrill has a noticeable contempt. This embarrassment is predicated on what the poem imagines is her ambivalent identification with them as her people. Second, this implies also an embarrassment on behalf of Merrill, with whom she identifies as an urbane and cosmopolitan traveler. Since she too is one of Merrill's social kind—sophisticated and modern—she is implicated in his failure. A third dimension to Bishop's imagined dismay, then, reflects her judgment of Merrill: she is disappointed in him because his attempt at a tribute has generated so much awkwardness and social anxiety.

In allowing us to imagine her dismay, Merrill's "tribute" to Bishop fails and leaves him embarrassed and, perhaps, feeling more foolish than bemused. As an instance of the poetry of manners, "Overdue Pilgrimage to Nova Scotia" marks out the limits of a social circle constituted by class and upbringing, with Bishop both inside and outside. However, it would be an oversimplification to claim that Merrill's dramatization of failure discloses a radical limit to the capacity of his manners to demonstrate the moral quality of respect. What he dramatizes as his failure—the failure of his manners and therefore also of his tribute to Bishop—may also be seen as an acknowledgment of Bishop's strangeness to him, an otherness that he cannot claim to know by heart.

But what does it mean to know someone by heart? Merrill clearly knows her work by heart, but to know a person by heart suggests an intimate knowledge that is deeply attuned to his or her sensitivities and vulnerabilities. We have already seen an example of such knowledge in the scene with Peter Hooten, where Merrill refrained from shrugging. Merrill's sensitivity to Hooten was potentially patronizing. With Bishop, however, Merrill allows himself to be subjected to the judgment of her dismay and excludes himself from a social circle of which he acknowledges her to be a member. By doing this rather than excluding this aspect of her identity from his social circle, Merrill accepts an embarrassment that in effect implies respect for the criteria by which Bishop is permitted membership in the social identity of Great Village. More specifically, Merrill's respect is for an aspect of Bishop's self that ought only to be honored implicitly and indirectly, as Merrill does, by a form of deference that diminishes one's value relative to the other—in this case, relative to the Bishop who is a member of the community of Great Village.[10]

In a diary entry for June 23, 1950, Bishop writes that "Embarrassment always comes from some falsity—the situation, manners, or a work of art—(I suffer from it now so horribly) . . ." (qtd. in Goldensohn 124). In her notes on *Letters of an American Farmer,* under the heading "Tact & Embarrassment," Bishop comments on a passage in which Crevecoeur describes how the wasps he has allowed to nest in his house take flies from his children's eyelids. "Why . . . does it *embarrass* one . . . ?" (qtd. in Goldensohn 124), Bishop asks. Paired with the notebook definition of embarrassment, this example suggests that Bishop's theory of embarrassment has a strongly empathetic focus, that embarrassment in connection with tact and manners—and therefore also with a work of art—is profoundly connected to embarrassment on behalf of another. By acknowledging and attempting to avert the conditions under which Bishop might experience dismay, Merrill demonstrates that he knows her by heart in the most intimate sense: not only does he know what will embarrass or dismay her, but he also knows that the moral causes of her embarrassment are worthy of respect.[11] Of course, since his poem rests on what is most likely a highly fictional account of his visit to Nova Scotia, Merrill's willingness to embarrass himself before his audience suggests an admirable humility in service of an homage to his friend. By allowing us to imagine Bishop's dismay at his expense, the poem discloses Merrill's respect for what Moore identified as Bishop's "deferences and vigilances" (176), which are shaped not by embarrassment or shame but by her sensitivity to "[t]he threat of human indecency and cruelty."[12] What Merrill attempted to learn from Bishop as a female role model is what he calls her "gift to be simple," which as a gift cannot presumably be acquired except by the secular equivalent of grace. He might have such a gift in mind when he says that "[m]anners are for me the touch of nature, an artifice in the very bloodstream" (*Recitative* 33). Being well brought up is not enough, it would seem, for one to have what Merrill hears in Bishop's poetic voice, and what Bishop heard also in Herbert: "the 'touch of nature' which makes the whole world kin" (Merrill, *Recitative* 129).

Notes

1. Though I will talk about class occasionally in this essay, I agree with Sheehan's distinction between kinds of social world. Robert von Hallberg's well-known discussion of class in Merrill's work concludes that the social world that most marks his style is the aristocracy of camp (109–13). I agree with Shetley's judgment, in his analysis of Merrill's "November Ode," that von Hallberg's conclusion, "while pointing to a real aspect of the poet's tone, is too harsh" (88). While Merrill's style is deeply marked by social distinction, his work, including "Overdue Pilgrimage to Nova Scotia," has the virtue, in Shetley's words, of refusing

> to forget the gulf between him and them [in this case the small-town victims of capitalism the poem is about], to pretend to more sympathy than he can genuinely feel, or to a greater share in their plight than really belongs to him. (88; cf. von Hallberg 109–13)

For a similar observation concerning Bishop, see note 8. Dolan offers the most challenging and profound discussion of the political dimension of Merrill's "neoaristocratic sensibility" (138); see in particular the parallel he draws with "Nietzsche's reassertion of rank and severity in the context of a critique of democracy" (155).

2. My comments on Merrill's "opera-going self" are indebted at almost all points to Koestenbaum's autobiographical ruminations, which are deeply Merrillean, on opera and homosexual identity. For relevant comments on the role of the imitation of the gestures and voice of the mother, see 92.

3. Koestenbaum provides a figure for the private theatricality I am imputing to Merrill: writing of Butterfly's entrance, he says that

> Opera kills the things it loves. Like Butterfly, if I enter opera, I will die, so I linger on its border to prolong and never complete my moment of entrance. I long to remain outside the frame of opera, immune to its dangerous charms, but I also feel narrative's seduction: I want to enter the story and I want the plot to proceed. (199)

4. It is difficult to determine when or whether Merrill would have read this entry in Bishop's notebooks, but it seems reasonable to speculate that he would have known, perhaps through conversation, of the importance of Pascal's idea to Bishop.

5. Merrill's self-mocking insistence on the singularity that distinguishes him from "Everyman" should be compared to his admiration for Bishop's lack of concern "with making herself any more remarkable than . . . she already is." This makes "hers . . . a purified, transparent 'I,' which readers may take as their virtual own" (*Recitative* 129).

6. Merrin has noted that the "childlike persona" that appears frequently in Bishop's work is a sign of her affinity to George Herbert and her "admiration for Herbert's *social* bearing, his tactful manners and quiet gentility" (52). Bishop makes the connection in a letter to Moore: "The negroes [in Florida] have such soft voices and such beautifully tactful manners—I suppose it is farfetched, but their attitude keeps reminding me of the *tone* of George Herbert" (*One Art* 68). As Merrin comments: Bishop's "'naturalness of tone,' like Herbert's, is also a matter of decorous comportment in relation to some larger power. . . . Bishop is humble in the presence of an incomprehensible and indomitable world" (53).

7. Emphasizing the tone of respectful homage of Bishop's memoir, Costello identifies what fascinates Bishop in the Moores' manners and, by implication, in Moore's work: "In Moore, surfaces and styles of behavior are the outward shows of inner attitudes. Manners express the rock foundation of an ethical system, and aesthetics are rooted to morality" (133). While Costello characterizes Moore as "[t]he Protestant poet of manners and morals" to distinguish her from Bishop as "the skeptic poet of mysteries" (130), she recognizes that "Bishop was deeply attracted to the high civility . . . of Moore's charmed imagination" (133).

8. White argues that "Whatever Bishop's personal interests may have been in countering the effects of social inequality, the poetry is most successful when its addresses are written from within social paradigms clearly demarcated by class" (128). In "Manuelzhino," for example, "the speaker reflects on the condescension inherent in her attitude toward Manuelzhino without challenging it" (129).

9. My use of *contempt* is indebted to Tomkins's discussion of shame and contempt (157-62). Relevant to my comments on Merrill and Bishop is Tomkins's argument on social discrimination:

> Contempt . . . is a powerful instrument of discrimination and segregation. By means of contempt, the other can be kept in his place. If, however, the response to contempt is shame, this characteristic consequence of distancing is much attenuated. (158)

10. As Erving Goffman argues, deference "represents a way in which the individual must guard and design the symbolic implications of his acts while in the immediate presence of an object [the self and the self of another] that has special value for him" (6). As a literary instance of what Goffman calls "interaction ritual," Merrill's tribute to Bishop is a complex dramatization of a deference that must at all costs manifest respect to the other.

11. In Tomkins's terms, Merrill is familiar with Bishop's "shame theory" (165). A person's shame theory is on the one hand a prereflective "ideo-affective organization" (165) that allows one to anticipate and therefore avoid situations that one has learned to see as provoking shame. On the other hand, a shame theory subjected to reflection can assume a moral dimension that enables one to claim that certain modes of behavior *ought* to provoke shame. It is on this basis that models of maturity and responsibility are socially enforced and regulated through upbringing, particularly through what Tomkins calls the "socialization of shame" (168). Merrill's respect for the shame theory implied in Bishop's dismay can be further clarified by Tomkins's comments on the moral dimension of shame: "The vicarious experience of shame, together with the vicarious experience of distress, is at once a measure of civilization and a condition of civilization" (162). Tomkins's definition of shame as being "activated by an incomplete reduction of excitement or joy" (129) could be mapped onto the embarrassment of both Bishop and Merrill: while Merrill's shame results from what he imagines would be Bishop's disappointment in him, Bishop's shame on behalf of Merrill is activated by the imagined diminishment of her regard for him. At this point, however, Bishop's shame has little of the "foolish" about it, since it is a shame that requires a mature judgment that is worthy of respect. The implication is that Bishop, as Merrill's poem asks

us to imagine her, recognizes that the part of herself that identifies with the rural Nova Scotians cannot communicate publicly with the part of herself that identifies with Merrill and his urbane class. Knowing that she is other to herself, she need not experience deep psychological conflict between these two identities—particularly the deep conflict that results in the affect we call shame. For this reason, though her dismay fits conceptually in the category of shame, it is more idiomatically appropriate to call it embarrassment.

12. Goldensohn briefly touches on the complex psychodynamics of embarrassment that the notebook entries suggest. She proposes that Crevecoeur's "display of vice," his performance of "an action that an implied *we* must never permit ourselves," evokes "shame for the species" (125). Because she attempts to understand it in terms of repression, however, Goldensohn's proposal, as accurate as it might be in some respects, would occlude the morally respectable dimension of empathetic embarrassment to which I am drawing attention.

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What's in a Name?
The Case of jeanettewinterson.com

Miguel Mota

If, as Michel Foucault maintains, the function of an author is "tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourses" (130), then any dispute over the legal rights to an author's name will constitute a struggle over how that function should be defined and articulated. The issue becomes especially contentious when the site of the struggle is the World Wide Web and the author is someone like Jeanette Winterson, who in much of her work celebrates the fluid, decentered subject. I would like to juxtapose Winterson's representation of a postmodern subjectivity in her fiction with the dispute over the domain name Jeanette Winterson on the World Wide Web, hoping to raise some questions about the subject's ontological status and its representation.

Winterson is commonly read and understood as a postmodern author. As Doan has argued, Winterson's work is imbued with many of the conventions associated with postmodernism: intertextuality, parody, pastiche, self-reflexivity, fragmentation, the questioning of master narratives, the problematizing of closure, the valorization of instability, and the suspicion of coherence (138). It clearly aims to challenge patriarchal and heterosexist discursive practices by facilitating a potentially productive oppositional stance and critique. Broadly speaking, Winterson's concerns in her fiction, the categories she interrogates, may be said to be history and the subject. Both of these she assumes largely to have been inscribed in the past by male-centered, male-privileged narratives. Her strategy is to reconfigure such narratives so as to construct other cultural spaces within which it may be possible to enact alternative performances. Often, though not always, she is concerned particularly with creating new spaces capable of articulating and celebrating lesbian identities and desires (Roesner 105).

In Winterson's repudiation of master narratives and in her attempts to give voice to alternative ones, one of her most consistent targets, not surprisingly, has been the Enlightenment subject: the fixed, unitary, coherent individual. As Meyer suggests, any "unitary approach" to Winterson or her work "forecloses on the multiplicity that she herself seeks to engender"; instead, "we must allow the novels to display the author's developing theory of contradiction in identity" (210). Winterson repeatedly celebrates the decentering of the fixed subject in her fiction, largely through what is for her the deeply political act of making stories. As Marvel observes, Winterson is "hoping all the time that [the making of stories] will challenge people, both into looking more closely at these things they thought were cut and dried and also, perhaps, into inventing their own stories" (168).

Winterson's third novel, *The Passion* (1987), includes the oft-repeated refrain "I'm telling you stories. Trust me" (5 and passim), reminding us that the invention of stories is inextricably tied in Winterson's work with the creation of narrative voice, a voice that often enacts a highly ambivalent and ambiguous relationship to the name that purportedly acts as its cultural and ontological signifier. Her 1989 novel *Sexing the Cherry* can be seen as perhaps the most successful instance of her desire to interrogate any assumption of an unmediated connection between subject, name, and narrative voice. Early in the story, Jordan, one of the novel's narrators, resolves to

> set a watch on myself like a jealous father, trying to catch myself disappearing through a door just noticed in the wall. I knew I was being adulterous; that what I loved was not going on at home. I was giving myself the slip and walking through this world like a shadow. (2)

Later, another of the novel's narrative voices asserts that "[t]he inward life tells us we are multiple, not single, and that our existence is really countless existences holding hands like those cut-out paper dolls, but unlike the dolls never coming to an end" (90). The emphasis here on the multiplicity of the self invites us to read this as part of Winterson's critique of traditional definitions of identity. Such a critique is already clearly present in the first page of the novel, when Jordan comes upon himself in the fog and with his hands "trace[s] the lineaments of [his] own face." Indeed, the novel's very first sentence, "My name is Jordan," might be seen initially as the assertion of coherent identity and of the connection between individual and name associated with the Enlightenment subject. Yet when that same sentence is repeated much later in the text (125), we can no longer be certain even of who is speaking, because any assumptions about transparent connections between narrative voice and name have been utterly undermined. Increasingly throughout the novel, a fixed *I* grows ever more elusive, to the point where narrative voices cannot always be separated or distinguished.

Sexing the Cherry is by no means unique in Winterson's canon in its questioning of the coherent subject. Winterson's first novel, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), complicates the relationship between the fictional and autobiographical subject by naming its narrator/protagonist Jeanette; the narrator of *Written on the Body* (1992) is neither named nor gendered; and by *Gut Symmetries* (1997), the "crazy ones are those who doubt that multiple possibilities for a subject exist" (Meyer 221). It is precisely this dismantling of the fixed, coherent subject that opens up the space in Winterson's work for different performances of identity and desire.

I would like now to juxtapose Winterson's promotion and celebration of the decentered subject as a project in her fiction with the controversy over ownership of the domain name Jeanette Winterson on the World Wide Web.[1] In early February 2000, Mark Hogarth, then a philosophy research fellow at Cambridge University, logged on to Register.com, typed in the name Martin Amis, and "was amazed to see it hadn't been taken" (Gallivan). So he took it. Hogarth not only registered the name of Martin Amis but also those of numerous other authors, including Peter Carey, Ian McEwan, Joanna Trollope, Jane Smiley, Don DeLillo, Julian Barnes, and Jeanette Winterson. In all, Hogarth registered the names of 132 authors.[2]

In an interview with the *Independent* on 14 March, Hogarth claimed he was intending to sell the names back to the writers for a one-time charge of between 3 and 5 percent of gross annual sales (Gallivan). In Winterson's case such a percentage might have amounted to between £30,000 and £50,000 ("He Stole My Name" 90).[3] Two days later, though, in a 16 March letter to Pat Kavanagh, a high-profile literary agent in the UK (and the wife of Julian Barnes), Hogarth wrote that he was planning to auction the names as a bundle to the highest bidder "while the public interest [was] still high" (Perkins). His words would come back to haunt him.

Though the other authors on Hogarth's list seemed, at least initially, unconcerned,[4] Winterson reacted quickly to Hogarth's registration of her name. First she confronted Hogarth on the telephone, and then she and her lawyers registered a complaint with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), a nonprofit organization formed by the United States government in 1998 to deal with, among other things, domain name disputes. One of ICANN's first acts was to adopt in 1999 a Uniform Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP). Though they are not legally binding, and the parties in question may dispute the ruling in court, UDRP proceedings were intended to provide a quick and relatively inexpensive opportunity for the owner of a trademark to challenge the abusive ownership of a domain name while avoiding traditional litigation (Katsh and Rifkin 64–65).[5] First and foremost, then, Winterson needed to establish her own personal name as a trademark. In fact, Mark Hogarth himself felt this would be his saving grace, later admitting: "I have to be honest that I didn't take [the complaint registered with ICANN] very seriously because one of the criteria was that the domain-name in question had to embody a trademark" (Bonisteel). Hogarth seemed unable to imagine that the cultural function of the author's proper name might itself be inscribed within a legal discourse of property.

The case of Jeanette Winterson v. Mark Hogarth was brought before an administrative panel of one, an arbitrator named David Perkins working for the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), on 10 April 2000.[6] By 22 May, the arbitrator had ruled that the name Jeanette Winterson did indeed constitute a trademark, that Hogarth's domain name was identical or confusingly similar to that trademark, that Hogarth had no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the domain name, and that the domain had been registered and was being used in bad faith (in this case—and here his words to the *Independent* and to Pat Kavanagh reverberated—for Hogarth's financial profit). Perkins ruled that the category of trademarks in this case was to be construed broadly in terms of the distinctive features of Winterson's activities, akin to the "common law rights in her real name, JEANETTE WINTERSON," and agreed with the claim by Winterson and her lawyers that under the mark Jeanette Winterson, she had

> achieved international recognition and critical acclaim for [her published works] and that use of that Mark [had] come to be recognized by the general public as indicating an association with words written and produced exclusively by the Complainant. (Perkins)

Thus, applying English law, the complainant had cause of action to prevent unauthorized use of the mark.[7] Soon Winterson wrote:

> How am I to trade if not under my own name? What happens when they visit a website called jeanettewinterson.com? They want content provided by myself or my authorised representatives. They don't want to visit a Cambridge don in cyberdrag. . . . Jeanette Winterson readers want Jeanette Winterson.
> ("He Stole My Name" 93)[8]

"I'm not attached to material possessions," she added, "but to be detached from my own name seemed to demand either schizophrenia or a Zen-like calm." Winterson was triumphant after the ruling in her favor, and in victory more than once would quote the declaration of Francis Gurry, WIPO's chief legal counsel and assistant director-general: "[The Winterson case] established that legal rights in a trademark did not require that the trademark be registered. Jeanette Winterson was a groundbreaker" (qtd. in "He Stole My Name" 93).

On the one hand, then, we have Winterson's representation of the subject in *Sexing the Cherry* and elsewhere in her fiction as decentered, unstable, and indeed unnameable in any unitary sense; on the other hand, we have Winterson's formidable and passionate fight to assert her own proper name in the dispute over her domain name on the World Wide Web. As we read Winterson's account of the events in question, we discover a subjectivity that, while seeking to establish a coherent legal and at times even ontological presence, simultaneously calls attention to its own instability. What I suggest, then, is that even in the struggle to assert the authority and autonomy of her own name, Jeanette Winterson articulates various and often contradictory performances of identity.

"In a very straightforward, unthinking way it had never crossed my mind to confirm my identity," Winterson wrote in her account of the domain name dispute: "I know who I am" ("He Stole My Name" 92). One could hardly imagine a more emphatic—indeed Thatcherite—assertion of autonomous individualism. Winterson conflates the categories of name and identity and "straightforwardly" asserts her status as individual subject. The relentless questioning of the *I* that we find in Winterson's fiction seems utterly absent here. Yet if we consider closely her account of the dispute, we discover ways in which this *I* is also foregrounded as a rhetorical performance.

The story of Hogarth's attempt to register Winterson's name first appeared on Winterson's website under the category of journalism, a genre suggesting an adherence to facts as well as to concrete and stable subjects.[9] Yet while Winterson classifies her piece as journalism, she titles it "He Stole My Name," associating it with the genre of pulp fiction, or at least with the kind of sensational press in which we might read about someone with 10 personalities. Winterson sets about describing the events in question as a breathlessly exciting narrative with herself as the central character. If calling the piece journalism implies that it concerns an extratextual subject, this subject is transformed rapidly into a textual one with an amazing capacity for self-dramatization:

> March 23rd. I cannot believe that British publishers and agents have known about the Hogarth scam for some weeks and done nothing. As I was standing around in Random House trying to piece together the facts and get a copy of the *Independent* piece, which I hadn't seen, I was told that lawyers were on the case and promised that "something would be done." It's a very British approach and makes me nervous.
>
> I had to leave in the dark and the rain to meet my friend Ruth Rendell, the mystery writer. On the way I called my own lawyers and asked them to check out both our registrations. Ruth's name had been registered the previous November by a Dutchman. Had she known about it? Of course not. Like most writers, she leaves that kind of thing to her agents. Like most writers, she's too busy getting on with her work to worry about savvying up on cyber-space.
>
> Ruth is a Baroness and we were at the House of Lords; the scene was surreal. As we walked through the ancient palace, I was ranting and raving about cyberkidnappers when a flunky came up and begged to remind Mi'lady that Mi'lady's guests were not allowed to talk on this particular piece of carpet. Only peers

> could do that and Mi'lady's guest was not a Lady was she?
>
> The flunky was right. I guess I'm not a lady, and that was why, later that night, I decided to get on the phone and speak to Mark Hogarth myself.
>
> "Is that Mark Hogarth?"
>
> "Speaking."
>
> "So why do you want to be me? This is Jeanette Winterson."
>
> He tells me I'm the first author who's called him, though he has had some nasty letters, which he finds "distressing." I point out that the writers are the ones who have reason to be distressed.
>
> "You hadn't registered it yourself," he says.
>
> True. In a very straightforward unthinking way it had never crossed my mind to confirm my identity. I know who I am. My books tell other people who I am. That used to be enough. I ask him why he's done this. He says he needs to make money.
>
> "Can't you make your own money?"
>
> "I'm at the end of my second research contract and I won't get another."
>
> "Can't you get a job?"
>
> "Not in Cambridge I can't. There are only about ten jobs in philosophy and I'll just have to wait for somebody to die."
>
> "What right have you to three per cent of a writer's earning?"
>
> "It's only for one year."
>
> I tell him we'll sue him and he says we'll lose, just like Bill Gates did in his domain-rights dispute. [. . .]
>
> March 24th. During the night I realized three things: that Mark Hogarth means business; that a softly softly approach will get us nowhere; that the auction must be stopped, now, today, before the names—my name—start a paper chase across the world. (92)

Winterson's account here of her telephone conversation with Hogarth on a dark and stormy night (an account that Hogarth hotly contested [Perkins]) reads much like a scripted exchange between characters in a Hollywood film, with Hogarth as the pathetic yet greedy villain and Winterson cast in the spunky Bette Davis or Barbara Stanwyck role. In fact, Winterson plays many parts here: the pragmatist willing to take charge of an unacceptable situation; the iconoclast, distancing herself from the typically "British approach"; the proletarian, proudly asserting that she is indeed "not a lady"; the nationalist, railing against a late twentieth-century version of Dutch imperialism; the coherent subject, triumphantly confirming her identity: "I know who I am." And in the melodrama and theatricality of the entire passage there is also a playful awareness of self-fictionalization, of a rhetorical performance of Jeanette Winterson as a character in a narrative. Like Jordan in *Sexing the Cherry,* then, Jeanette Winterson here signals a split, decentered subject. Nowhere is this more apparent, perhaps, than in her use of the word "cyberkidnapper" to describe Mark Hogarth. Given that the more common term used in such instances of illicit occupation of virtual space is *cybersquatter,* Winterson's "cyberkidnapper" suggests a multiple, at the very least a dual, subject, as it positions her both as the hostage and as the payer of the ransom money.

This split subject is implied also in Winterson's response to the statement made by WIPO's chief legal counsel after the ICANN ruling in her favor. As we've seen, counsel commented: "[The Winterson case] established that legal rights in a trademark did not require that the trademark be registered. Jeanette Winterson was a groundbreaker." In her account of the case, Winterson proudly cites that last sentence as evidence of her individual triumph in courageously taking on an Internet hooligan and personally breaking new ground for all those who wish to take back possession of their own names. But of course the sentence "Jeanette Winterson was a groundbreaker" may be read as expressing an understanding of "Jeanette Winterson" not as referring to the person but to the case. The name "Jeanette Winterson," then, even as it is stabilized in one context, comes to perform in another a series of complex relationships among lawyers, arbitrators, complainant, respondent, and public and private spaces.

There is a tension here too between the desire to assert ownership and control of one's name on the World Wide Web and the structure and nature of the medium itself. As Gaggi argues:

> Certainly, in subtler and more immediate ways, working with electronic textuality modifies our feeling of subjectivity. Traditional texts, both visual and verbal, address a localized spectator or reader—implied by logical vanishing points or by nar-

> rating voices that seem directed toward an individual reader. A conventional book creates the illusion that at the moment of its being read a single author addresses a single reader. In electronic networks no single author addresses any single reader, or, if one does, their exchange emerges from and immediately reenters a broader context of multiple speakers and listeners. There is a polyphony of voices, and the authority of each of them is continually qualified by their mutually commenting on one another. (111)

Indeed, the potentially contingent aspect of any specific content on the web guarantees that any construction of subjectivity enacted within it is always potentially fluid and unstable. Winterson's account of the Hogarth case cannot be accessed consistently on jeanettewinterson.com, and in fact is not there as I write this; but it may reappear at some time in the future and of course can be reproduced elsewhere, as it has in *Brill's Content*. Furthermore, Winterson's website, while clearly an attempt on one level to control the production and circulation of the author's name, nevertheless encourages the kind of interactive participation by its readers that ensures play around the name and identity of the author. That Winterson provides her fans with a voice on the site by encouraging e-mail exchanges not only with her but also among themselves has the effect of enacting and positioning "Jeanette Winterson" in a variety of ways. Some correspondents, for example, may use the e-mail list as a forum for discussing issues having little or nothing to do with Jeanette Winterson, relegating the name of the author to the margins of her own domain. And of course others can readily build links to jeanettewinterson.com from their own websites, thereby incorporating into potentially very different performative spaces whatever constructions of author and authority may exist within Winterson's own site.

Finally, Winterson's relationship and negotiations both with the Internet and with the status of her own subjectivity as author are highly ambivalent. In another piece, also under the heading of journalism on her website, titled "Let's Start with a Story" and posted shortly after the publication of her 2000 novel *The.Powerbook,* she writes:

> In 1439 Johann Gutenberg took on an apprentice to help him produce a book on his new printing press. Twenty copies of Ovid's Metamorphosis were carefully run off and left to dry

> before being bound in vellum. The apprentice was a forger by trade, and Gutenberg had employed him for his quick mind and light hands. As the apprentice painstakingly changed the type page by page, he asked Gutenberg how anyone would be able to tell which of the Ovids was the original. Gutenberg was baffled. He tried to explain that the books were identical—that any number of them could be produced, all original and all copies. His apprentice grew heated. Did Gutenberg take him for a fool? There was always an original, and afterwards copies, and no doubt forgeries, that was how the market worked. . . . What the story illustrates is two completely different ways of thinking. Gutenberg knows that what he's doing will change the future. His apprentice can only understand the new invention in terms of the past. . . . When big things happen, even the cleverest of us, the most sophisticated, start gibbering away like Gutenberg's apprentice, either denying the enormity of the change, or using a language—and therefore a way of thinking—that has already been outdated by what we are trying to describe.

Winterson's celebration of a technological revolution seems to echo such early boosters of the possibilities of the Internet as George Landow when he argues that "it is no mere coincidence" that it is the arrival of hypertext that has allowed us to articulate the book itself as a technology: "We have, to use Derridean terms, decentered the book" (25). But for Landow such decentering does not stop at the book: "electronic linking reconfigures our experience of both author and authorial property, and this reconception of these ideas promises to affect our conceptions of both the authors (and authority) of texts we study and of ourselves as authors." It would appear from her criticism of Gutenberg's apprentice in the above passage that Winterson questions the authenticity of the printed text. But does she question the authenticity of the author?

Suggesting that the "trick" in embracing the Internet "is not to take an analogue mind into a digital world" ("Let's Start with a Story"), Winterson asserts that "Internet technology is a new kind of language and a new kind of thinking. . . . It is also a creative tool, and those who complain that the Internet will kill the book do not recognize that there is no murder, only a transformation of the book, both as artifact and as idea." But does she acknowledge or accept a "transformation" of the subject as author too? In the earlier passage, Gutenberg is presented as visionary, his apprentice as reactionary. Not surprisingly, in her own enthusiasm for the new technology, Winterson aligns herself with Gutenberg. But in insisting on the authenticity of her own identity in the domain name dispute, she reveals herself to have more in common than she might be willing to recognize with the figure of the apprentice and his belief in the fundamental distinction between the "original" and the "forgeries," the real Jeanette Winterson and the "Cambridge don in cyberdrag."

Ultimately, for all the play of the subject in her fiction and for all the fictionalization of the self in her account of the Hogarth case, Winterson returns to a passionate belief in artistic genius and by implication the moral and legal right of such genius to control the production and circulation of its own name. "We all know the stories of Archimedes leaping out of his bath," she writes in "Let's Start with a Story":

> Newton and his apple, Harrison and his clocks, Einstein and his strange vision in the Alps, James Lovelock dreaming one night that the earth should be understood as a living organism and not as a solid belch of minerals and gas. Call it lateral thinking, call it a vision, or inspiration, it cannot be justified by an appeal to common sense. Common sense did not help Alan Turing crack the Enigma code. Genius did.

And in imagery that recalls passages in *Sexing the Cherry*, "genius" is associated for Winterson with the "[r]eal writers, painters, musicians [who] take us through the everyday seeming-solid world into a limitless space where, for a time, we are freed from the problems of gravity." Elsewhere she writes, "It's always been the privilege of the artist not to be boxed in time, not to be boxed into a particular identity" (qtd. in Carlson). The tension here between "privilege" and a play of subjectivity finally points toward conflicting desires. We see a desire for the endless play of the subject, what Derrida has called the "unnameable," which can proclaim itself "only under the species of the nonspecies, in the formless, mute, infant, and terrifying form of monstrosity" (Derrida 293). But Winterson also wants to stabilize the name of the author, at least in the public marketplace, where the legal sanctioning of the name Jeanette Winterson as a trademark, as a recognizable commodity, is but a sign of the author's ontological status as creative "genius."

Notes

1. Ezer gives a clear and concise introduction to domain names:

> The architecture of the domain name system has been designed such that every domain name is globally unique. One acquires the right to use a particular domain name by registering that name with an authorized administrator of the central database of names, such as Network Solutions, Inc., and paying the initial registration fee and subsequent renewal fees, which are typically biannual. Once a domain name has been registered, it is unavailable for use by any other party in the world. When a party attempting to register a name discovers that it is already in use, and he believes that for some reason he has a superior right to use that domain name, he can initiate legal action against the party who registered the domain name. (1310)

2. Though Hogarth was clearly a pioneer in this area, he was not breaking entirely new ground. In June 1999 three men had allegedly attempted to sell for $10 million the domain name of Barry Diller, then head of USA Networks, Inc., causing Diller to sue. Around the same time as Winterson was locked in her battle with Hogarth, a number of other celebrities, including Brad Pitt, Madonna, John Tesh, and Julia Roberts, were involved in similar disputes (Ezer 1291–92).

3. Originally published in 2000 in jeanettewinterson.com, "He Stole My Name" was later published with slight alterations in *Brill's Content*. Winterson's official website, designed by Pedalo Limited, was erected immediately after the resolution of her case against Hogarth.

4. "What was the matter with the British?" Winterson wrote later:

> Didn't we understand? Well no, actually, we didn't, is the correct answer. The general view in Britain among publishers, agents and writers alike was that Hogarth was very boring but the whole thing would soon run out of steam, and why would you want these dots anyway?
> ("He Stole My Name" 93)

Fellow writer Julian Barnes, however, was also quick to speak up against Hogarth's purchase of his name. He wrote in the *New Yorker:*

> No doubt there are more things dreamt of in Dr. Hogarth's philosophy than in mine. And mine, increasingly, boiled down to this: Hey, no, that's my name. That's what it says on my spines. Books are but words, yet those are two of the most charged and indicative. They're also the last ones I insert in my typescript. Text, dedication, title, author: that's how I do it, ritualistically. Those two words are me. They're proof that

> I do such things. First you lowercase me, then you sell me. "And makes me poor indeed"—on the nose again, Shakespeare. And I don't think he would have paid up, either.

5. For background on the UDRP see also <http://www.icann.org/udrp/udrp.htm>. ICANN's UDRP was first tested on 2 December 1999, one day after it came into effect. The World Wrestling Federation (WWF) brought a complaint against Michael Bosman after the latter had registered the domain name worldwrestlingfederation.com for $60 and then offered to sell it back to the WWF three days later for $1000. On 14 January 2000, precisely two months before Mark Hogarth went on his own buying spree, Bosman was found to have registered the domain name in bad faith, and the WWF won its case (Brooks 321–22).

6. Katsh and Rifkin argue that ICANN's "one highly flawed" decision, one that was to raise issues of trust and fairness, was to allow the complainant in a domain name dispute to choose the "arbitration provider." Between January 2000 and January 2001, Winterson's choice of arbitrator, WIPO, ruled in favor of the complainant over 80 percent of the time. Not surprisingly, during that same period WIPO was the complainants' most popular choice as arbitrator. The least popular, eResolution, found for the complainant less than 60 percent of the time (110–11).

7. For the full text of the WIPO panel decision in the Winterson case, see Perkins. For precedents in English law, see Azmi 197–98.

8. Rickett quotes Tom Porter, cofounder of Pedalo, designers of jeanettewinterson.com:

> Authors have niche, fanatical audiences that crave more information. They have a unique relationship with their readers. And the readers in turn want to feel that the site is being run by "their" authors. . . . The majority of Internet companies fail because of the cost of advertising—but authors just need to put domain names in books, and the job is done.

Winterson's attachment to her own name of course is intricately tied to the type of marketing strategies alluded to here. "If a writer," she claimed at the time, "cannot go on the Web, as myself, in my own right, with my own work, then how am I to trade?" (qtd. in Harrison).

9. Winterson's home page at jeanettewinterson.com—The Official Site is divided into the following categories: books; audio visual; multimedia; about Jeanette; monthly column; reading; directory; journalism; news; and messageboard.

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The Course of a Particular: On the Ethics of Literary Singularity

Jon Kertzer

In Wallace Stevens's poem "The Course of a Particular," the cry of wintry leaves provokes a shift in mood from robust assurance that "one is part of everything" to a depleted sense of the world drained of meaning:

> The leaves cry.
> . . . .
> In the absence of fantasia, without meaning more
> Than they are in the final finding of the ear, in the thing
> Itself, until, at last, the cry concerns no one at all. (*Palm* 367)

These two dispositions—one expansive and gregarious, the other contracting to the vanishing point of consciousness—suggest two complementary responses to literature. I will be concerned with the latter, which tries to acknowledge the uniqueness of a literary work; but it must first be set against the "fantasia" whose absence it announces in order to trace a path of diminishing returns. My purpose is to explore the rhetoric of singularity in order to detect its "final finding," that is, its aesthetic and ethical limit. My hope is that artistry and ethics will converge: the course of a literary particular leads to ethical discovery.

According to Stevens, however, such a discovery "concerns no one at all." This hardly sounds like a strong moral position,[1] and defining that position in relation to the artistry that exposes it will be my subject. My own path, which runs from the numerous to the singular, requires some signposts. I intend, first, to mark the path's two limits by contrasting a criticism of plenitude with a criticism of austerity; then to inspect some rhetorical devices through which singularity is indicated; then to show

how this rhetoric isolates the here-and-now in the instant of its inception and deception, its birth and death; and finally to examine how an aesthetic of singularity raises a comparable ethical challenge that sets moral generality against the dignity of the unique. Stevens will serve as one of my guides.

The shipwreck of the singular

When studying any literary work, we customarily nudge it in two directions, though not in equal measure. Usually we relate it to other texts in an expanding pattern of interdependence within larger contexts and communities. Whether the terms of explication are historical, cultural, biographical, national, generic, or religious, a work gains significance within a wider field to which it contributes, however modestly. No artist or artifact has its meaning alone, T. S. Eliot advises in a famous dictum, because it participates in an "ideal order," a totality that is temporarily complete yet continually altered as new works are added to it (38). A text is intelligible through its relation to other texts: as one elegy in an elegiac tradition, or as an American lyric, or as a novel by Virginia Woolf, or as an example of women's writing, and so on. At the imagined limit of this expansive view lies a glimpse of all literature conceived as one ongoing discourse—a grand intertextual poem, myth, or conversation forever in progress. Northrop Frye provides one of the most daring modern attempts to see literature steadily and to see it whole by fitting every work into a vast network of modes, myths, and genres,[2] all combining in a sublime vision of cultural totality corresponding to what Eliot calls "the mind of Europe" (39). A poem is like a single thought within that mind.

As the critic's field of vision expands, however, individual works become more and more significant, yet less and less discernible as they are engulfed by the whole. Ideal readers catch every allusion and influence, but at the cost of losing the shock of first discovery. As a countermeasure, they try to savor a literary work not in relation to other writing but in and for itself. It may be another eighteenth-century, middle-class novel written by a Protestant man for women readers, but it is this particular text and not another one, read here and now, not elsewhere. How are we to account for its specificity? Even an ardent advocate of intertextuality like Harold Bloom admits, "There can be no poem in itself, and yet something irreducible does abide in the aesthetic" (*Western* 23).

Although the specificity of a literary work may strike us forcefully on first reading, it is difficult to define because all the modes of definition at our disposal have the perverse effect of depriving a work of its particularity. Explanations inevitably generalize. Whether we explain a text by means of categorization, analogy, paradigm, function, influence, or genealogy, the process of understanding in each case is contextual and systematic. It is relational, whereas specificity is what precedes any relation and then enters into it. Do the primary units have any identifiable standing before they contribute to a larger structure of meaning, or are they created only by the act of being differentiated within it, just as left has no meaning until paired with right? Even analyzing a poem into its constituent parts fails to disclose its particularity, because analysis is possible only if we are already able to recognize those parts and their functions. To do so requires that we rely on general structural principles, which specify the parts as parts in the first place. In this case, to specify does not mean to isolate what is unique in a poem but to draw from a repertoire of established practices. To analyze a sonnet into quatrains and tercets is to recognize it as a sonnet, and so to relate it to a conventional lyrical category.

If the imagined limit of the expansive critical view is a total literary universe where "one is part of everything," the limit of the contracting view is irreducible singularity—"the thing / Itself" apart from all else. Neither extreme is attainable, but the path to the first is more inviting than the path to the second. The first promises glory, the second threatens ruin. The first is accommodating, because it finds room for everything, whereas the latter founders on what George Oppen calls the "shipwreck / Of the singular":

> Obsessed, bewildered
>
> By the shipwreck
> Of the singular
>
> We have chosen the meaning
> Of being numerous. (151)

Meaning is never really a matter of choice, since we cannot live without it, and it is always "numerous" in the sense that it is relational and participatory. To understand is to relate, and relations always proliferate. The challenge, therefore, is to renounce the numerous with its fantasy of totality in order to focus on singularity, even if it invites disaster.

Indeed, we seem to be offered a choice between too much or too little—either the disaster of unassimilable multiplicity or the shipwreck of singularity. Stevens succinctly calls the former a fecund "principle," the latter a chaste "particle" (*Palm* 215). Principle pushes the imagination to "a point / Beyond which thought could not progress as thought"; particle pulls it to "a point / Beyond which fact could not progress as fact" (229). Because each extreme leads Stevens's character, Canon Aspirin, to "nothingness," it is tempting to seek a common ground accommodating both. But accommodation is itself an activity of expansive critical intelligence, as it aspires to "the whole, / The complicate, the amassing harmony" (229). The challenge to imagine the singular remains.

According to Bloom, we treasure "something irreducible" in each poem, which is all the more precious for the enigmatic immediacy of its appeal. Even Frye, the great systematizer, agrees that criticism can only give knowledge *about* literature, which is quite different from actual literary experience felt on the pulse. The original pulsation has no voice of its own, because critical understanding

> is founded on a direct experience which is central to criticism yet forever excluded from it. Criticism can account for it only in critical terminology, and that terminology can never recapture or include the original experience. The original experience is like the direct vision of color, or the direct sensation of heat or cold, that physics "explains" in what, from the point of view of the experience itself, is a quite irrelevant way. However disciplined by taste and skill, the experience of literature is, like literature itself, unable to speak. (*Anatomy* 27)

The dilemma of critical knowledge is captured in the oxymoron "aesthetic distance." Sensory or aesthetic experience is direct, not distanced. Criticism makes the immediate experience of art intelligible only by rendering it less and less immediate. It speaks about art by preventing it from speaking for itself. Theory establishes the general principles and preconditions from which literature arises, yet theory itself is belated, always trailing after "the direct experience of literature, where uniqueness is everything" (*Anatomy* 361). Generalizing on this dilemma, Jean-François

Lyotard argues that philosophy can never comprehend the instantaneous "gesture" made enigmatically by art. Aesthetic presence is punctual, whereas philosophical understanding is postponed:

> The artist asks of us philosophers that we think the perceptible singularity that is presented here and now: a work or works that are here, now, in the singularity of their occurrence. But we should bear in mind that this possessive of occurrence is only reconstituted by memory after the fact. (75)

Because understanding lags behind the experience that it interprets retrospectively, it will always miss the singularity of its object. It will be baffled by a unique gesture that "no mode of thought is capable of thinking" directly, only of reconstituting in a displaced form:

> the fact that there is a gesture in space-time-matter, the fact that it *is* there and is a gesture—constitutes the impenetrability of the work for thought. It is precisely to the level of this enigma that the artist obligates the philosopher to place or displace his thought, and this is so whether the artist is aware of it or not. It is up to the philosopher, in the awareness of his debt, to know this for both himself and the artist. (75–76; Lyotard's emphasis)

How are we to acknowledge literary uniqueness, when any systematic explanation of it must rely on generalities?

In opposition to a critic like Frye, who enlarges his theoretical gaze to accommodate everything, is Paul de Man, who renounces such grandiose presumption by forcing poetic thought back toward particularity, knowing very well that it can never achieve its goal. Both critics undertake pilgrimages to the limit of thought, though in different directions, and both find their efforts thwarted by the very nature of literature, whose vitality springs from a uniqueness that theory can only dissipate. But whereas Frye patiently constructs a baroque system culminating in a glorious "anagogic" vision that compensates us for the original loss, de Man follows the opposite course. He devises an ascetic path leading to the expiry of meaning in singularity—the final finding that concerns no one at all. He agrees that literature itself is unable to speak, but he respects its muteness by resisting the appeal of comprehension—the inclusiveness of critical thought. According to Tobin Siebers, "Generality is the hallmark of the kind of theory that de Man most opposes" (100) because he believes that "[p]hilosophical generality is the death of genuine self-knowledge" (120). He renounces comprehension because it is driven by a will to power through violent totalization. As a corrective, he stubbornly resists theory's philosophical tendency to convert the unique into the general by summoning the arsenal of rhetorical disfiguration and erasure associated with deconstruction. By these means he retraces the course of the particular almost to the point of nullification. Insofar as something is truly unique, it is unknowable and unsayable, because knowing and saying both rely on signification, which operates through equivalences: this for that, signifier for signified. The unique eludes the web of signification because it is not comparable or equivalent to anything else. It is solely itself; as soon as equivalence is found, uniqueness is lost. To propose any analogy or relationship, even contrast, which requires some commonality on which to distinguish the contrast, would be to forfeit "something irreducible" abiding in the aesthetic.

I begin, therefore, by offering Frye and de Man as opposing responses, each daring in its own way, to the need for criticism to respect aesthetic singularity even as it relies on theoretical generality. The word *accommodate* suggests what Frye welcomes and de Man repudiates: the spaciousness of thought. In the comprehensiveness of literary appreciation, Frye finds a sublimity that restores to literature the splendor of the innumerable, discrete poetic moments on which his grand system rests. For de Man, on the other hand, literature's value lies in its uncanny ability to dismantle all equivalences and renounce all compensations until we can almost imagine the uniqueness of being. Where Frye's critical vision culminates in the timeless copresence of all literature, de Man's confines itself to a random instant. The cost of this austere revelation is devastating, for we must accept, de Man concludes bleakly,

> that nothing, whether deed, word, thought or text, ever happens in relation, positive or negative, to anything that precedes, follows or exists elsewhere, but only as a random event whose power, like the power of death, is due to the randomness of its occurrence. (*Rhetoric* 122)

To Frye, this inchoate world of dislocated singularities would look like hell.

Its single emptiness

Given a choice between an all-encompassing totality and an all-excluding singularity, most literary theorists nowadays would probably choose neither. The present climate of opinion welcomes pluralities of all kinds—multicultural, heteroglossal, polysemic, interdisciplinary—but under two competing conditions. First, these pluralities must never be subsumed within a single overarching system; and second, they must never pretend to be autonomous. In exploring the rhetoric of singularity, then, I might seem to be backing the wrong horse. I am not eager to follow de Man's example, only to show that whether we grasp the specificity of a literary work by emulating his critical self-martyrdom, as Siebers calls it (117), or by thinking austerely with "a mind of winter," as Stevens advises in "The Snow Man" (*Palm* 54), we require some analogy to express a poetic individuality that precedes any analogy and will be falsified by it. Ironically, we require a double strategy to contemplate singularity. Because analogy invites us into a "fantasia" of correspondences that entice us to become "part of everything," we must first consider but then decline the invitation through a policy of denial, isolation, or annulment. In Stevens's terms, we must reject a principle in order to isolate a particle. Here are a few rhetorical tactics that allow us to particularize.

A simple but intriguing way of evoking singularity is through insistence, as in Gertrude Stein's refrain: "A rose is a rose is a rose." Each repetition narrows the focus, as one flower belonging to the large class of roses is finally distinguished as *this* rose and no other. In her lecture "Composition as Explanation," Stein explains (repeatedly) that repetition is her way of "groping for a continuous present" small yet capacious enough to include everything: "I naturally made a continuous present an including everything and a beginning again and again within a very small thing" (518–19). As her novel *The Making of Americans* mushroomed to a thousand pages, however, she realized that she could only cherish a thing's particularity by marking its difference from all other small things. Her singular style had to show not only that we always live in a present stuffed with innumerable details, but that the present is forever changing—"if it is all so alike it must be simply different and everything simply different was the natural way of creating it then" (519). At the limit of this contracting process she finds an enigma. As a single object like a rose is progressively isolated from everything else, it loses the commonality it shares, first with other flowers, then with other roses, until it stands solitary but indefinable even as a rose. It is not this flower or this rose but merely *this.*

The deictic *this* recalls the insistent gesture concluding Stevens's poem "The Man on the Dump": "Where was it one first heard of the truth? The the" (*Palm* 164). This poem drastically shrinks its focus until it points not at the thing itself but at the verbal function (the definite article) through which things are specified. Here is an act of specifying without content. Another, less esoteric example of definition through insistence appears in Martin Amis's enthusiastic praise for Philip Roth: "There aren't supposed to be degrees or intensities of uniqueness, and yet Roth is somehow inordinately unique. He is bloodymindedly himself, himself, himself" (290). Amis makes a show of defying logic by placing Roth in a class by himself. If his peculiar style pervades his writing, then it is recognizable for being repeated, but that repetition is traced back to a unique source—presumably Roth's creative personality—which cannot be named, only circled relentlessly and marked out by that circling. These examples suggest that the rhetoric of singularity is positional and indicative; that is, it seeks ways of pointing from a distance at an untouchable source—the rose itself, the unique personality, the the.

Another gestural tactic is the hapaxlegomenon, a word that appears only once in a document or corpus, such as a neologism or unrecognizable word. Whereas Stevens resorts to the definite article, a word so common that it has no meaning of its own, other writers imagine words that can be used only once. In practice, a word that is truly unrepeated or unrepeatable would be incomprehensible. Iterability makes words both intelligible and ambiguous, because they can only be understood when they are used and shared, yet reiteration also makes them constantly change their meaning in new contexts. If they were never repeated, they might seem frozen at the moment of utterance, pure but without resonance. A. M. Klein uses the Hebrew form *millot bodedot* ("words alone," corresponding to "hapax legomena") to evoke this magical insularity:

> Isolated words. Lonesome words. They occur but once in the whole Torah, and are related to no other word. In English, or rather in Greek, they are called hapaxlegomena, words of single occurrence. Once, only once, do they appear in the Bible, and then are not heard from again. (*Notebooks* 131)

Even to cite a hapaxlegomenon is, perversely, to destroy it by using it a second time, thus converting it into common currency. Instead, Klein accords exclusive value to the word of single occurrence by identifying it with God's divine fiat—"let there be light"—a genesis that occurs only once. The poet imitates this creative moment by "uttering" a fictional world, and Klein's eloquent example from "A Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" illustrates how quickly the single utterance proliferates into a fantasia of correspondences:

> Look, he is
> the nth Adam taking a green inventory
> in world by scarcely uttered, naming praising,
> the flowering fiats in the meadow, the
> syllabled fur, stars aspirate, the pollen
> whose sweet collision sounds eternally. (*Poems* 638–39)

The hapaxlegomenon is performative—a self-creating word—but as Zailig Pollock shows in his commentary on Klein, it must also be self-destructive if it can be performed only once. There is a demonic parody of the hapaxlegomenon in the death sentence: the irrevocable word that hangs over us all and that, for Klein, finds its worst exclamation as a nuclear explosion or the Holocaust (Pollock 207–08).

Both genesis and death decree, the singular word is ascribed an uncanny power exerted at either the very beginning or the very end of things. Or more correctly, it offers a way of imagining how beginnings begin and where endings end. Because of its proximity to creation and destruction, it is too dangerous to touch. Anne Carson asks why neologisms should be so disturbing, and answers:

> If we cannot construe them at all, we call them mad. If we can construe them, they raise troubling questions about our own linguistic mastery. We say "coinages" because they disrupt the economic equilibrium of words and things that we had prided ourselves on maintaining. A new compound word in [Paul] Celan, for example, evokes something that now suddenly seems real, although it didn't exist before and is attainable through this word alone. It comes to us free, like a piece of new air. And (like praise) it has to prepare for itself an ear to hear it, just slightly before it arrives—has to invent its own necessity. (134)

A neologism has to prepare for its own coming; otherwise it cannot be received intelligibly at all. "Coinage" suggests a fresh minting of meaning, but the image is wonderfully inappropriate, since singularities are not commensurate with other things and therefore cannot be exchanged for them. Their value is not economic but inspirational, as Klein shows. Perhaps that is why both poets immediately associate the creative burst of language with praise, but also with irrationality.

The same is true of my third example, catachresis, which is the other side of the coin. If neologisms upset the equilibrium of words and things, and the hapaxlegomenon is a word without a thing, then catachresis is a thing without a word. Also known as *abusio,* it is a strained metaphor ("take up arms against a sea of troubles") but is also used to point at something with no proper name of its own. Common examples are *table leg, book leaf,* and *mother tongue.* Here again, the verbal economy is disrupted by an odd performance. In most metaphors one term is substituted for another, but there can be no substitution of a figurative word for a literal one if the literal one does not exist. Instead, we have what the witches in *Macbeth* ominously call "A deed without a name" (4.1.49). In the heyday of deconstruction, catachresis was regarded as the abusive rhetorical deed *par excellence.* Jacques Derrida treats it as the way language strains between sense and reference (59–60); J. Hillis Miller sees it as a primal misnaming that lurks in all words (19–20); de Man calls it "[t]he trope which coins a name for the still-unnamed entity, which gives face to the faceless" ("Lyrical Voice" 57), and he warns:

> Something monstrous lurks in the most innocent of catachreses: when one speaks of the legs of the table or the face of the mountain, catachresis is already turning into prosopopeia [personification, literally "to give a face"], and one begins to perceive a world of potential ghosts and monsters. ("Epistemology" 19)

As Klein's Adamic poet illustrates, these metamorphoses quickly proliferate into a hallucinatory fantasia, but only after they have been invoked by an unnameable singularity that remains faceless and wordless. It is the power of speech that has not yet been spoken, the inhuman substratum of humanity to which de Man's analysis constantly leads him. In his wintry mood, Stevens annuls the creative fiat invoked by Klein by abjuring personification and relinquishing metaphor (even if he must do so metaphorically) in order to return to the instant before light emerges from the first sound:

> In this bleak air the broken stalks
> Have arms without hands. They have trunks
>
> Without legs or, for that, without heads.
> They have heads in which a captive cry
>
> Is merely the moving of a tongue.
> Snow sparkles like eyesight falling to earth,
> . . . .
> It is in this solitude, a syllable,
> Out of these gawky flitterings,
>
> Intones its single emptiness,
> The savagest hollow of winter-sound
> (*Palm* 247–48)

Here is a deed without a name, a form without a shape, a word without a meaning. The poem's imagery pinpoints singularity at the convergence of light, sight, and sound by evoking a temporality in which the present is isolated in the precision of its immediacy. It focuses not on a rich, contemplative moment as in Marvell's "The Garden" or Milton's "Il Penseroso," and not on Stein's bulky continuous present, but on the here-and-now, which is always singular, always transient, and always different.

The last Onset

Right here, right now, Stevens says in "Man Carrying Thing," "The bright obvious stand motionless in cold" (*Palm* 281), but the reality so brilliantly revealed stands only for an instant. In the rhetoric of the instantaneous, the bare present, which vanishes as we touch it, is more elusive than the past, which can be exhibited by memory, and more elusive than the future, which can be anticipated. Past and future join in the comfortable continuity of a "major reality"—an explanatory myth like Frye's—that poets entice us to enjoy but also warn us to resist whenever we retreat to the cold, solitary present. These rival dispositions again offer a rhythm of elevation and relapse in "As You Leave the Room":

> Now, here, the snow I had forgotten becomes
>
> Part of a major reality, part of
> An appreciation of a reality
>
> And thus an elevation, as if I left
> With something I could touch, touch every way.
>
> And yet nothing has been changed except what is
> Unreal, as if nothing had been changed at all. (396)

A "major reality" seems fully tactile yet proves to be specious or "unreal." It is a lofty fantasy that appreciates in value under the aegis of imagination, but then must be depreciated imaginatively in its turn. In "The Sail of Ulysses" the "particular thought" is a "difficult inch," which is easily coaxed into "Plantagenet abstractions" and "stellar largenesses"; but Stevens warns that the poet must also resist the "law / that bends the particulars to the abstract" (392) in order to face the present in its strange momentariness. It is the barely imaginable reality that first provokes sensation and cognition. Time, sight, and thought converge in the image of light—one of Stevens's favorites—as in the common expression "to see things in a flash."

Singularity, sensed fleetingly as the brilliant intersection of time, being, and thought, finds more familiar expression in the modern fascination with photography, for instance in Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*. The click of a shutter and the illuminating flash mark the beginning of another double strategy whose goal is to reclaim the present:

> What the Photograph reproduces to infinity has occurred only once: the Photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially. In the Photograph, the event is never transcended for the sake of something else: the Photograph always leads the corpus I need back to the body I see; it is the absolute Particular . . . the *This* . . . the Real, in its indefatigable expression. (4; Barthes's emphasis)

Here again is a preoccupation with first and last moments, with cognition and recognition, with first utterance and last breath. Barthes, too, imagines singularity as a mere "This," which he can only point to from a distance measured by the lapse between taking the photograph and viewing it later. The creative instant is characterized by "contingency, singularity, risk" (20), which Barthes sums up nicely in the figure of "surprise" (32), a jolting discovery that lies "outside of meaning" (34) yet is the precondition for any subsequent understanding. The second, recuperative moment is characterized in various moods as interpretation, objectification (13), nostalgia, and justice (70), but also, since the past is gone forever, as melancholy, mourning (79), and catastrophe (96).

Modernist poetics, especially in its early formulation as imagism, also stresses the singularity of visual or tactile stimulus in conjunction with intuitive thought and spontaneous language. The best-known examples are Ezra Pound's definition of the poetic image as an emotional and intellectual complex released instantaneously (4) and T. E. Hulme's equating of meaning with sight and touch, in contrast to the tardiness of sound (77–78). A better example for my purposes is D. H. Lawrence's attempt to cast off tradition and aspiration (past and future) in order to formulate a poetry of the immediate present:

> But there is another kind of poetry: the poetry of that which is at hand: the immediate present. In the immediate present there is no perfection, no consummation, nothing finished. The strands are all flying, quivering, intermingling into the web, the waters are shaking the moon. . . . We look at the very white quick of nascent creation. A water-lily heaves herself from the flood, looks around, gleams, and is gone. We have seen the incarnation, the quick of the ever-swirling flood. We have seen the invisible. We have seen, we have touched, we have partaken of the very substance of creative change, creative mutation. . . . Give me the still, white seething, the incandescence and the coldness of the incarnate moment: the moment, the quick of all change and haste and opposition: the moment, the immediate present, the Now. (85–86)

For Lawrence, the present is at once the most palpable and the most intangible of states. He associates it with the quick of life, which he pictures as a creative spark that ignites change but cannot share in it, since it lives only in the instant of its passing. He condenses this paradox in the word "still," which ambiguously suggests both quietude and continuance, stasis and motion: "the still, white seething." Most revealing is the way his imagery links vitality to death (here the trope is as much romantic as it is modernist), because life is felt most intensely at the instant of its loss. Similarly Barthes identifies the ageless photograph with mourning, and de Man in a quotation above associates particularity with both random energy and "the power of death."

These examples suggest that the course of a particular comes into focus if we imagine it situated in a present that expires as soon as it occurs, and is only known when it haunts us afterwards. Dylan Thomas evokes such a moment in "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London," a Second World War elegy that steadfastly refuses to lament a child's death in the Blitz and then concludes: "After the first death, there is no other" (192). Because we die only once, contemplating the instant when life ceases—a traditional, devotional exercise—can give ecstatic assurance of the uniqueness of our being, which is most precious at the moment of loss. Following his own double strategy, Thomas draws on religious imagery (Zion, synagogue, sackcloth, "stations of the breath") which he renounces in order to lament all the more strongly. He, too, evokes a comforting fantasia—the ceremonies of mourning, the solace of religion and the afterlife—only to reject their comforts through a series of oratorical denials stretching from the first word ("Never") to the last ("no other"). Some readers may interpret this poem as subtly (or not so subtly) reaffirming the religious faith that it makes a show of denying, as it mourns for the dead child by pretending not to. But we might also hold Thomas to his word: after the first death, there is no other.[3] De Man identifies lyric poetry with two mutually exclusive kinds of mourning. The more familiar is expressed in the lyrical impulse to establish a temporal harmony that humanizes death through a "pathos of terror": to mourn is to cling to the past and so to preserve it, however painfully, as ongoing testimony to the value of one's grief. The more stringent form of mourning offers no such comfort. It insists on looking death in the face by refusing even to personify a face:

> True "mourning" is less deluded. The most *it* can do is to allow for non-comprehension and enumerate non-anthropomorphic, non-elegiac, non-celebratory, non-lyrical, non-poetic, that is to say, prosaic, or, better, *historical* modes of language power. (*Rhetoric* 262; de Man's emphasis)[4]

As the parade of negations indicates, we are back in de Man's world of random events, which precede any historical continuity and resist being assimilated into it. Viewed in this way, Thomas's refusal to mourn is not a way of defying death or of triumphing over it but of submitting to its power by relinquishing past and future and renouncing even the pathetic continuity of bereavement. The death of a child thus portrays most poignantly what must be true of all people at any moment: all are unique, mortal, and therefore irreplaceable.

Dying may take a lifetime, but death is instantaneous. The desire to isolate the final second of life by filling it with all the significance that is about to vanish appears in proverbial notions such as prophesying with one's dying gasp, like John of Gaunt in Shakespeare's *Richard II;* or having one's life flash before one's eyes, as in Ambrose Bierce's story "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" and in A. M. Klein's poem "And in that drowning instant," which condenses not only an individual life but the Jewish diaspora into its glimpse of a "preterite eternity" (*Poems* 609). Literature is full of fine death-bed scenes, and none more poignant than Bottom's theatrical death throes in *A Midsummer Night's Dream:*

> Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.
>   Now am I dead,
>   Now am I fled;
> My soul is in the sky.
>   Tongue, lose thy light;
>   Moon, take thy flight.
> Now die, die, die, die, die.   (5.1.295–302)

The joke is that the last moment goes on and on and on, yet when the noblemen scoff,

> Demetrius: No die, but an ace, for him; for he is but one.
> Lysander: Less than an ace, man; for he is dead, he is nothing.
> (5.1.303–304)

they illustrate how death is painful proof of a uniqueness that language strains to express. Through their wordplay, dying becomes gambling—a bet that we all lose—and singularity (the ace, or single spot on the die) is proclaimed only as it is nullified.

Compare this bombastic display of mortal singularity with three other examples. The first concludes Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilych," when Ivan's prolonged suffering grants a charitable insight that ultimately redeems him from the futility of his life. As he feels his son kissing his hand, he is surprised by a joyful intuition, which is expressed as falling, as light, as release from pain, and as the euphoric temporality of dying:

> There was light instead of death.
>
> "So that is it!" he suddenly said out loud. "What happiness!"
>
> All of this took place in an instant, but the significance of that instant was lasting. For those present his agony continued for another two hours. Something rattled in his throat, his emaciated body twitched. But gradually the wheezing and the rattling ceased. (283)

A similar pattern appears more ironically in Yuri Olesha's story "Lyompa," which again entices the reader toward the unimaginable, in this case by inventing the odd word that serves as the title. Critically ill, Ponomarev turns away from all the bubbling, snorting sounds that animate his house. In contrast to a young child, whose world is expanding explosively as he discovers a bewildering fertility of things that he cannot name, Ponomarev feels reality contracting:

> First, the number of things on the periphery, far away from him, decreased; then this depletion drew closer to the center, reaching deeper and deeper, toward the courtyard, the house, the corridor, the room, his heart. . . . Death was destroying things on its way to him. Death had left him only a few things, from an infinite number. . . . The vanishing things left the dying man nothing but their names. (142, 144)

Fading into abstraction, he is left with a lone, absurd hapaxlegomenon, which he associates with a noisy rat in the kitchen:

> He knew that at any cost he must stop thinking about the rat's name. But he kept searching for it, knowing that as soon as he found that meaningless, horrifying name, he would die.
>
> "Lyompa!" he suddenly shouted in a terrifying voice. (145)

The word is all the more frightening for naming the unnameable. My third example is Emily Dickinson's poem "I heard a Fly buzz—when I died" (223–24), in which light, sight, and sound again converge at the moment of death. The speaker patiently awaits "the last Onset" (death as oxymoron), wills her "Keepsakes," and finally concentrates on the "uncertain stumbling Buzz" of a fly. Like Olesha's rat, it becomes the focal point of her expiring life, its tiny furious energy revealing all that she is about to lose. Instead of wordplay or neologism, Dickinson ingeniously contrives a reflexive doubling that turns insight into blindness, as if a word could be in oxymoronic relation to itself:

> And then the Windows failed—and then
> I could not see to see—

I noted that the rhetoric of singularity is positional: it points from a distance at an untouchable source. In these last examples, the configuration fixes on a contracting point—the dead center—where the powers of speech and vision are confounded at the moment of revelation. This pattern is familiar in mysticism, but it is also a formation that Elaine Scarry ascribes to the perception of pain. Although aesthetic experience is usually associated with pleasure—or with the vicarious pleasures of tragic, pathetic, or sentimental pain—pain demonstrates even more forcefully the severe concentration of particularity. Pain concentrates the present moment with the severity of its command; or as Pascal said with epigrammatic polish: "The present usually hurts. . . . it afflicts us" (39, my translation). In Scarry's account, as the world contracts for the torture victim (32–33), the self is first isolated and then dissolved (47), until the "absolute privacy" of its suffering becomes confused with utter self-exposure (53). An experience of pure interiority deepens until it is suddenly externalized. Pain, she argues, is the one somatic state that has no object in the external world:

> desire is desire of *x,* fear is fear of *y,* hunger is hunger for *z;* but pain is not "of" or "for" anything—it is itself alone. This objectlessness, the complete absence of referential content, almost prevents it from being rendered in language. (162)

For this very reason, however, it incites an imaginative fantasia—a "dense sea of artefacts and symbols" (162)—that never suffices to render the uniqueness of the experience, and therefore circles it restlessly. The name Lyompa is such a symbol-without-reference, while Dickinson's self-nullifying phrase, "I could not see to see" evokes such an experience-without-object. Scarry's analysis of this phenomenological pattern explains why intense physicality so readily finds expression as intense spirituality. It also illuminates Stevens's oracular decree that the course of a particular

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gradually excludes all others until it "concerns no one at all." The absolute privacy of pain obliterates everything but the self, suffering here and now; then the strange singularity of death obliterates even the self. We experience the pain of dying, but how do we experience our death?

The supreme dignity of the unique

A religious response to the above discussion would see the course of a particular as a moral path leading to God. "One is one and all alone and ever more shall be so," sings the refrain of an English folksong celebrating the original singularity, and the singular originality, of the divine source of life.[5] Alexis de Tocqueville speculates that God alone does not require general ideas because "[a]t a single glance he sees separately all of the beings of which humanity is composed" (411). Because the human mind cannot encompass such bewildering variety, it must reduce "the immensity of detail" to inexact generalities:

> General ideas do not attest to the strength of human intelligence, but rather to its insufficiency, because there are no beings in nature exactly alike: no identical facts, no rules indiscriminately applicable in the same manner to several objects at once.
>
> General ideas . . . never provide it with anything but incomplete notions, and they always make it lose in exactness what they give it in extent. (411)

A religious sensibility must acknowledge the precious uniqueness of each soul, a uniqueness expressed, for instance, in Egyptian mythology where the god Anubis weighs souls after death but never finds two with exactly the same weight.[6] At the beginning of this essay I wondered what moral footing might be offered by an aesthetic insight that, in Stevens's words, grows "less and less human" (*Palm* 264) until it "concerns no one at all." Through its very exclusiveness the rhetoric of singularity poses an ethical challenge, since in each of my examples the unique moment of sensory impact, of illumination, of the here-and-now, of pain and death, is simultaneously a moment of moral awakening and its frustration. Ethical conduct depends on the *duality* arising from a practical, principled confrontation between oneself and another person for whom one is responsible or to whom one is answerable. Each example discloses personal responsibility—what one owes to others (Tolstoy, Thomas, Klein), to the social and physical world (Olesha, Stein, Lawrence), or even to oneself (Dickinson)—but it does so just as one's power to exercise that responsibility is lost. The unique moment vanishes just as its demand is felt, its loss only heightening the perplexity of the obligation. In Kant's famous formulation, "ought implies can": we can be morally obligated to perform only actions that are within our power. To be obliged to perform an impossible or unknowable act is meaningless, because "duty commands nothing but what we can do" (Kant qtd. in Stern).[7]

The paradox of literary singularity, which is impenetrable to the critical understanding that explicates it, thus corresponds to a comparable ethical dilemma. Ethical insights, like aesthetic ones, become intelligible only within a larger system framed by general principles and rules, but that very generality dispels the uniqueness of the insight and the urgency of its call. Individually what we encounter is not duty as an abstract principle but *my* need to act here and now. The ethical imperative occurs instantaneously; only later can we assess its wider implications. Zygmunt Bauman explains the dilemma as a contrast between duty and responsibility:

> Only rules can be universal. One may legislate universal rule-dictated *duties,* but moral *responsibility* exists solely in interpellating the individual and being carried individually. Duties tend to make humans alike; responsibility is what makes them into individuals. Humanity is not captured in common denominators—it sinks and vanishes there. The morality of the moral subject does not, therefore, have the character of a rule. One may say that the moral is what *resists* codification, formalization, socialization, universalization. (54; Bauman's emphasis)

Like de Tocqueville, Bauman sees generality as an enabling limitation of human thought that conflicts with the particularizing imperative of ethical being. What I called the expansive critical view, which sees literature as one vast system, finds a partner in the Kantian ethical tradition, with its categorical imperative that submits every personal decision to the stringent test of universality: "What we call good must be an object of desire in the judgment of every rational man, and evil an object of aversion in the eyes of everyone" (Kant, *Practical* 80). Far from concerning "no one at all," desire for the good requires that "one is part of everything."[8] For Kant, the test of both aesthetic and moral judgments is universality. The paradox of aesthetic experience is summed up in the notion of taste, understood as a subjective universal. As the metaphor of sensory taste implies, aesthetic experience is purely subjective, a pleasurable feeling, yet it is also disinterested, without ulterior purpose, and universal—a "necessary delight" enjoyed by all who share the same "common sense" (Boos 20).[9] We can distinguish "good" and "bad" taste concerning the beautiful only within a community of shared responses, a community whose standards Kant treats as universal. Similarly, ethics is rooted in our "sensible nature" (Kant, *Practical* 80) with its urgent demands of the moment. The good, like the beautiful, is commanding: it imposes itself directly; it is thrilling. Nevertheless, morality is intelligible only as a social discipline based on general rules impartially applied. Ethical encounters transpire through the interplay between personal will and social law (81), between discrete experience and universal rule. However, their interplay is asymmetrical rather than harmonious. Slavish conformity to the rule obscures the justice of individual cases; excessive insistence on peculiarity (the exception to the rule) threatens the law's authority. There is always a tug-of-war between generality and specificity.

In this contest, Kant ensures that the general always commands the specific: rational law must be the a priori determination of the particular will. However, maintaining this deductive pattern requires what he calls a "paradox of method": *"The concept of good and evil must not be determined before the moral law (of which it seems as if it must be the foundation), but only after it and by means of it"* (82; Kant's emphasis). Rules are not framed in accordance with what is good; rather, the general law precedes the discrete experiences from which it seems to arise: "it is the moral law that first determines the concept of good, and makes it possible, so far as it deserves the name of good absolutely" (83). Modern theory tends to twist this paradox in the other direction by asserting the priority of the particular over the general, as is illustrated by a comment from Ludwig Wittgenstein's notebook: "ethics presupposes the *uniqueness* of life" (qtd. in Greisch 74). "Presupposes" suggests that the uniqueness of the moral agent comes first as the precondition of moral generalities, which then follow inductively. Responsibility precedes duty; or in Fabio Ciaramelli's words,

> Ethical obligation arises not from the logical and ontological universality of reason which discloses to knowledge criteria

> for freely determined action, but rather immediately from the uniqueness of the moral situation itself. . . . moral obligation takes hold immediately, before understanding or decision on the part of the subject. (85)

The philosopher who argues most passionately and enigmatically on behalf of ethical singularity is Emmanuel Levinas.

From Levinas's richly opaque writing, I wish to stress only how he offers the novelty of the self as an enigmatic point of departure for all ethical encounters—as a radical singularity that permits duality yet remains aloof from it. He begins with a customary clearing of the rhetorical ground. The singular self ("ipseity") is not displayed in essential qualities: it is not a "distinguishing characteristic, a *unicum* or a *hapax,* like fingerprints"; it is not an ego, agent, consciousness, or "individuated quiddity resulting from any incomparable quality inherent in the body or character, or the unicity of a natural or historical conjuncture" (*Basic* 84). Ethics begins before any of these have been formulated with the summoning of "an indefeasible unity." The precious uniqueness of each soul is marked not just when it expires at death, but when it is startled into moral being. This is the first onset: the instant when "the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity" (*Ethics* 95) is constituted through an "assignation" between two solitary selves who realize themselves only through that encounter. "The ego is an incomparable unicity" (*Basic* 114) that must be "troubled" from its passivity into moral, intellectual, and social consciousness. This occurs when the "uniqueness of the I" (55) confronts the "nameless singularity" (85) of the "face" of the Other:

> Before the neighbor I am summoned and do not just appear; from the first I am answering to an assignation. Already the stony core of my substance is dislodged. But the responsibility to which I am exposed in such a passivity does not apprehend me as an interchangeable thing, for here no one can be substituted for me; in calling upon me as someone accused who cannot reject the accusation, it obliges me as someone unreplaceable and unique, someone chosen. Inasmuch as it calls upon my responsibility it forbids me any replacement. (143)

"[T]he I qua I is absolutely unique" (28), but it only asserts its uniqueness when summoned to responsibility by another "pure individual" (7).

Like de Man, Levinas wants to imagine the disconnected particularities of being before they are rendered intelligible by "the labor of thinking" (*Basic* 153), which then disposes them into general categories. The moral moment precedes thought and therefore cannot be thought ("thematized"). Its irreducible specificity is prior to all the systems of definition that I listed earlier (analogy, category, causality, etc.), and according to Levinas, it even precedes the fundamental structure of symbolic exchange that makes linguistic signification possible. It is therefore unspeakable and unknowable (85), although it provides the primary unit from which speech and knowledge will arise. Happily, where this anarchic state made de Man think only of death, it makes Levinas think of life:

> This is the bursting forth of incessant novelty. The absolute novelty of the new. This is the spirituality of transcendence, which does not amount to an assimilating act of consciousness. The uninterrupted bursting forth of novelties would make sense, precisely beyond knowledge, through its absolute and unforeseeable novelty. (155)

Stevens imagines the original cry of life as a wintry genesis: a syllable that intones its single emptiness. For Levinas, however, it is "a cry of ethical revolt, bearing witness to responsibility" (147) as it sounds the first moral injunction: "The first word of the face is the 'Thou shalt not kill.' It is an order. There is a commandment in the appearance of the face, as if a master spoke to me" (*Ethics* 89).[10] The moment when moral power is summoned is also the moment when it is restrained in view of "the supreme dignity of the unique" (101).

In this dramatic account, genesis (emergence of selfhood), mortality (awareness that one could kill the Other) and responsibility (altruism) are all revealed instantaneously. What poet could achieve more? Ethics and aesthetics again exhibit the same structure, but now a specific obligation or artistic response is not subsumed within general rules or aesthetic forms; instead, the particular stubbornly resists the generality to which it contributes. This asymmetrical relationship appears in one of Levinas's phrases, "Nous n'est pas le pluriel de Je" (qtd. in Bauman 48)—the solitary I is not absorbed by a collective we. And he expresses this paradox not as poverty but as excess. In contrast to de Man's ascetic withdrawal is Levinas's prophetic affirmation of responsibility as startling, commanding, overwhelming, transcendent. Precisely because the atomic I precedes any rational, social, or psychological articulation of its character, when summoned into proximity with the Other it is awed by the transcendence of limitless responsibility: "I am responsible for a total responsibility, which answers for all the others and for all in the others, even for their responsibility. The I always has one responsibility more than all the others" (*Ethics* 99). In defiance of fairness, adequation, harmony—of any rational judgment—he invokes "[t]his surplus of being, this existential exaggeration that is called *being me*" (*Basic* 17).

"For Levinas, the ethical shows itself as the prophetical" (Ciaramelli 92). If we look to literature for prophetic moments when singularity encounters its own excess, we find them most readily in romance and in the sublime. We are back in Northrop Frye's territory. Frye treats romance as a transgressive genre that foresees not a return to the stability of family, duty, and political order but revolutionary transformation. It exhibits not the circularity of comic restoration but a spiral of creative revelations. Comedy offers restitution; romance promises deliverance. Comedy offers justice by granting characters what they deserve; romance grants more than they deserve. Frye finds a remarkable expression of redemptive singularity in the romantic motif of the threat to virginity, often accompanied by risk of torture or sacrifice (*Secular* 80). While these threats obviously express patriarchal conventions of male dominance and female modesty, for Frye they also point to "a vision of human integrity" menaced by

> the one fate which really is worse than death, the annihilation of one's identity. . . . What is symbolized as a virgin is actually a human conviction, however expressed, that there is something at the core of one's infinitely fragile being which is not only immortal but has discovered the secret of invulnerability that eludes the tragic hero. (86)

Romances are about the loss and recovery of identity, but that unique core of being cannot really be described. Identity feels all the more fragile when it is threatened, yet it is "a state of existence in which there is nothing to write about," a state that romances gesture at from a distance by invoking an earlier ("once upon a time") and a later ("they lived happily every after") time beyond record (*Secular* 54). In the meantime, where all stories occur, what protects the "beleaguered virgin" or faithful wife (or heals her if she is sacrificed) is not so much the intrepid male hero as "a certain redemptive quality" (87) inherent in her patient, untouchable singularity.[11] Virginity cannot be touched or "known" either conceptually or physically, since what is touched is not virginity but only its apparent loss. "[W]hat is objectively untouched symbolizes what is subjectively contained," Frye states quaintly of a wonderfully fertile purity, a virginity that is "perpetually renewed . . . in a world where every experience is fresh and unique" (153). This, too, may be a male fantasy, but it also expresses an energy that perpetually animates the novelty of an innocent world. Working within the conventions of romance, it "emphasizes the uniqueness, the once-for-all quality, in the creative act" (184). Or in Stevens's words, it marks "an immaculate beginning" (*Palm* 209).

The final scene in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale,* where the faithful wife Hermione apparently is resurrected, can be seen as an example of aesthetic and ethical creativity corresponding to Levinas's notion of ethical awakening. After the first death—Hermione's patient 16 years in hiding, which enacts a kind of chastity—there is a magical rebirth through the recreation of life through art: the statue comes to life to the sound of music. Her resurrection is a gift in excess of the occasion. Just as the earlier sacrifice of Leontes's innocent son Mamillius is far worse than justice demands, his wife's return to life is far better than any reward commensurate with his expiation of his sins. Remorse cannot reanimate the dead. Nor does the found daughter Perdita replace the lost Mamillius, since no unique self is equivalent to any other self. When Levinas speaks of the self as "hostage," he is not referring to a fair substitution of one for the other but to an "involuntary election" (*Basic* 121–22). Similarly, the final moment in *The Winter's Tale* points to a power beyond moral calculation—a blessing. With startling simplicity Leontes's words, "O, she's warm" (5.3.109), evoke the shock of aesthetic and moral insight, the sudden gesture whereby a scene that in realistic terms would be absurd becomes enchanting.

Finding moments of transcendent particularity in Stevens's poetry is tricky, because for all his love of "transport"—the triumph of delight over bare fact—he expresses his triumphs ambiguously or achieves only a "satisfaction" of reason or imagination (*Necessary Angel* 42). To be satisfied is to find enough (Latin: *satis*), not to pursue excess. Whereas Levinas prophetically announces "[t]his growing surplus of the infinite that we have ventured to call *glory"* (*Basic* 144), Stevens is more diffident. In "Sailing After Lunch" he foresees only a "slight transcendence to the dirty sail" (*Palm* 112) of his craft; in "Extracts from Addresses to the Academy of Fine Ideas" he proposes that the world's familiar climate is enough:

> There is nothing more and that it is enough
> To believe in the weather and in the things and men
> Of the weather and in one's self, as part of that
> And nothing more. (183)

And in "Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour" he concludes modestly:

> Out of this same light, out of the central mind,
> We make a dwelling in the evening air,
> In which being there together is enough. (368)

Only "together" hints that the unique self is not self-sufficient but must probe beyond limits. The same hesitancy appears in section 7 of "The Man with the Blue Guitar," which first proclaims, "The blue guitar / And I are one," but later asks if one can ever remain all alone:

> I know that timid breathing. Where
> Do I begin and end? And where,
>
> As I strum the thing, do I pick up
> That which momentously declares
>
> Itself not to be I and yet
> Must be. It could be nothing else. (139)

The haunting phrase "that timid breathing" recalls the first hint (and last gasp) of life in *The Winter's Tale,* but as it leads to a "momentous" (momentary, crucial, imperative) assignation with an Other, Stevens seems wary of venturing too far, as if the glory might fade if affirmed too romantically.

One can twist Stevens into any convenient shape—Emersonian, Nietzschean, Santayanian, Derridean, etc.[12]—and I would like to avoid contriving a clumsy application of Levinas's ideas to the poetry. Instead, we should hope for a coincidence of mood, image, or situation, since Levinas delineates his drama of solitude, summons, and transcendence in such lyrical terms. The two dispositions with which I began this essay can lead Stevens, on the one hand, to an omnivorous imagination that consumes whatever it surveys; and on the other hand, to a dense solipsism that recognizes the Other only as a stunted expression of oneself. The former appears in "Anecdote of the Jar" (*Palm* 46), where the artifact placed on a hill in Tennessee composes the landscape (just as "Tennessee" and the "anecdote" are themselves compositions) by taking dominion over it.[13] The latter appears in images of confinement or monotony. His provocative question, "Where / Do I begin and end?" is often posed in such a way as to leave the reader uncertain how to proceed. Nevertheless, in his essay "The Figure of the Poet as Virile Youth," when Stevens asks only for "satisfaction" of reason or imagination, he promptly suggests that "an idea of God" just might satisfy both and so would provide "a sanction for life" (*Necessary Angel* 42–43). His coy understatement ("This is an illustration") cannot disguise the enormity of his intimation: such a sanction (blessing) would "momentously" exceed any egotism. Similarly, "Academic Discourse at Havana" begins skeptically by restraining the lusty imagination with its promise of glory ("perfect plenitude," "ornatest prophecy"), but through the chastening of thought it raises a hope that poetry still might achieve "An infinite incantation of our selves" (*Palm* 87–89).

"Credences of Summer" (287–92) offers a final illustration of how aesthetic particularity can be troubled into opening an avenue to ethical insight. Here is a modest example of Klein's Adamic poet discovering the world, but its peaceful evocation of summer is upset by anxieties expressed in oxymorons and paradoxes. Instead of being frozen in a wintry present, the poem is poised at "the axis of everything" between "spring's infuriations" and "the first autumnal inhalations." Its celebration of ripeness ("green's green apogee") is an odd occasion to look for the virginity of the particular, yet the season is so fruitful that it reveals an "essential barrenness": "This is the barrenness / Of the fertile thing that can attain no more." If the instant of death marks the summation of life, then this moment of completion "[b]eyond which there is nothing left of time" is the summation of the year. Stevens stresses the uniqueness of the present and of the perspective that it affords by isolating the here and now. "Now" the poem begins, here at "[o]ne of the limits of reality," the landscape's festival of light, sight, and sound pinpoints attention on "the very thing and nothing else . . . [w]ithout evasion by a single metaphor." (Levinas notes that the "oneself" lives "without metaphor, which palpitates" [*Basic* 84]). Here and now "[i]t comes to this"—the unassigned demonstrative pronoun marking a particularity without defining it—"and we accept what is / As good. The utmost must be good and is."

To find sensory and contemplative joy in a summer day is necessarily to appeal beyond oneself to the earth and its vital gifts. "Dear life redeems you," proclaims Paulina in *The Winter's Tale* (5.3.103), and Stevens's speaker claims more modestly to be "appeased" by the generous scene. While Frank Kermode feels that the subject of "Credences" is "total satisfaction" (106), most readers have been less convinced (Jarraway 225). The limit of reality should be a place where belief (credence) is justified and desire is fulfilled ("Exile desire / For what is not"), but by section 5 the rhythm grows restless as the speaker wonders about the goodness that he has just argued himself into affirming. Some dissatisfaction turns his meditation into what Charles Berger calls the "dark countersong" of a "counter-sublime" (83, 86), as it questions the relation between "concentred self" and Other, between particular and general. Does the valiant particular dominate generality ("One day enriches a year") as the jar claimed—both heroically and absurdly—to dominate Tennessee; or does a defining generality ennoble all its particulars ("Or do the other days enrich the one")? Where do I begin and end?

The beginning is the "rock" (section 6)—unique, "extreme," elemental, conveying no secret meaning ("hermit's truth") beyond its bare existence "on this present ground." The end is more difficult to foresee, because Stevens persists in renouncing the traditional solaces of romance or the egotistical sublime (section 7). As he explains of a similar situation in "Angel Surrounded by Paysans": "the point of the poem is that there must be in the world about us things that solace us quite as fully as any heavenly visitations could" (*Letters* 661). The visitations in "Credences" arrive with the awakening call of the trumpet (section 8) and cock (section 9), which can be compared to Levinas's "cry of ethical revolt, bearing witness to responsibility" (*Basic* 147), at least in the sense that they herald a challenge from the world beyond the self that forever implicates the self. For Levinas, too, ethics is an "awakening" that "designates the improbable field where the Infinite is in relationship with the finite without contradicting itself by this relationship. . . . The Infinite transcends itself in the finite" (*Basic* 146). Stevens would agree with the last sentence. His trumpet does not herald the resurrection of the dead, only of the summer with its virginal fertility. The "resounding cry" urges us to "share the day." It not only startles the mind into awareness of its own precious existence, but makes it "aware of division . . . [a]s that of a personage in a multitude." Commenting on these lines, Justin Quinn argues that Stevens's specific landscape in Olney, Pennsylvania, is "already woven through with social meaning by the generations of the people who have lived here" (119), and therefore the "multitude" refers not to abstract humanity but to a local community "with its ceremonies, family ties, and transmission of cultural and ethical values" (118). The scene draws the speaker into its intimacy. The cock, too, is a "civil bird" that momentously makes "a sound / Which is not part of the listener's own sense," and which urges him to speak his part in "[t]he huge decorum, the manner of the time, / Part of the mottled mood of summer's whole." What the self earns here is not dominance but dignity.

Notes

1. There is little moral advantage in Joseph Carroll's summation of "The Course of a Particular":

> In the absence of fantasia, these two aspects of particularity, the self and the world, are equivalent in their meaninglessness. Stevens repudiates essential unity, but he does not then revert to a celebration of the parts of the world. The failure of transcendental affect leaves him at the nadir of the cycle from Romanticism to indifferentism. (306)

2. This is the effort of Frye's whole career as a critic, not just of a single work, but *Anatomy of Criticism* presents his widest view of literature.

3. Other readings of this poem note allusions to Revelations 2.11: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" and to Revelations 20.6: "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

4. De Man's use of *"historical"* is deliberately provocative, since he is not appealing to a historical explanation but to the rhetorical ground of historical narratives: "One would then have to conceive of a rhetoric of history prior to attempting a history of rhetoric or of literature or of literary criticism. Rhetoric, however, is not in itself an historical but an epistemological discipline" ("Epistemology" 28)

5. "Green Grow the Rushes O" is a song with a pagan version (http://www.paganlibrary.com/music_poetry/green_grow_rushes.php) and a Christian version (http://www.know-britain.com/songs/green_grow_the_rushes-o.html), both celebrating the divine source of life and reveling in its multiplying power.

6. I owe this point to Philippe Beaussant: "c'est Anubis qui pèse les âmes de l'autre côté de la mort et n'en trouve pas deux qui aient le même poids" (259–60).

7. Stern collects and analyzes 11 instances where Kant expresses this principle.

8. Ciaramelli explains:

> The ethical project, then, is to submit freedom of will to the rule of rationality in the attempt to find criteria for human action that are universally intelligible and valid for everyone. In this way, particular human situations are subsumed under a general and universal order from which they receive their meaning. (84)

9. Kant writes:

> Consequently the judgment of taste, accompanied with the consciousness of separation from all interest, must claim validity for every man, without this universality depending on objects. That is, there must be bound up with it a title to subjective universality. (*Judgment* 46)

Stephen Boos explains subjective universality as follows:

> A judgment of taste is . . . not a logical judgment but an aesthetic one, by which Kant means a judgment whose basis is subjective. On the other hand, an aesthetic judgment is not simply a matter of the agreeable, since it makes a claim to universality. When I claim that x is beautiful, I am not simply claiming that *I* feel that it is beautiful but making a claim that is valid for others as well. . . . When we judge an object as beautiful rather than merely pleasant, one judges not only for oneself but for everyone else, that is, one judges with a universal voice, yet one does so without a concept, that is, without a category of the Understanding. To make this demand is to presuppose that the taste and feeling by which we make the judgment is common to everyone and hence implies a *sensus communis,* a "common sense." (19–20)

10. Leonard Grob explains the first moral cry as follows:

> Before the totality is rent by the manifestation of the face, there can be no will to act *immorally,* as there can be no will to act *morally,* in any ultimate sense of that word. . . . Morality makes its first appearance when I confront the Other who is truly Other.
>
> Although the Other appears to me now, on principle, as someone I could wish to kill, he or she *in fact* summons me to respond with nonviolence: I am called to willingly renounce my power to act immorally. What I hear from the Other, Levinas claims, are the words "Thou shalt not kill." Harkening to this injunction constitutes my inaugural act as an ethical being. (8–9; Grob's emphasis)

11. Frye briefly extends his discussion of virginity to include men in *Words with Power,* p. 195.

12. An Emersonian Stevens: Harold Bloom's *Wallace Stevens;* Nietzschean: B. J. Leggett's *Early Stevens;* Santayanian: Joseph N. Riddel's *The Clairvoyant Eye;* Derridean: J. Hillis Miller's "Stevens's Rock and Criticism as Cure," parts 1 and 2.

13. Even here Joseph N. Riddel finds ambiguity and excess as "the imagination's forms invariably leave something out of account" (44).

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A Scattering of Salts: Merrill's Temporal Innocence

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In *A Scattering of Salts* the return of innocence "with a difference" (*Poems* 651)[1] is Merrill's aim and his subject. This volume's poems seek ways to combine innocence and experience, to achieve a renewal of innocence that does not deny knowledge, experience, or time. Merrill desires innocence as an openness to the possibilities of each new moment, a way to approach the present and future with potential for wonder and hope. But his is not an Adamic stance that erases the past, motivated by a will to what Emerson calls an "original relation to the universe" (3).[2] Neither is it an elegiac yearning for an idealized childhood or Milton's "native innocence" (373) prior to knowledge and guilt.[3] Rather, like Blake's, Merrill's innocence "dwells with Wisdom" (697).[4] Like Stevens in "The Auroras of Autumn," Merrill pursues innocence through confrontations with change and death. But Stevens struggles to find or imagine an innocence outside of time, "innocence / As pure principle" (361), not subject to mutability.[5] Merrill relinquishes desire for purity or transcendence and invents a contingent innocence that arises in time and is subject to change.[6] It is a shifting, dynamic balance of contraries, an ongoing poetic creation that does not reconcile opposites into harmonious simplicity.[7] Its aspects of youth and age, hope and dread, imagination and knowledge "dissolve / And meet in astounding images of order" (Merrill, *Poems* 11), the balance between opposing terms constantly changing. *A Scattering of Salts* invents a new figure for this complex innocence: a gem or crystal seen in its temporal, material process of becoming, a "bright alternation" (674) of crystallized form and contingent flux.

This volume's gems are very different from the static, decorative ones that encrust *First Poems,* those "emeralds . . . sapphires . . . pearls" that Richard Howard sees as the defining feature of that work (33). Howard reserves his praise for later poems that get "into the stream of occurrence" (13) and the unusual early poem that dismisses "jewels and emblems in favor of happenings" (12).[8] In *A Scattering of Salts* "Gemlike projects keep forming" (*Poems* 638), but they are products of "the stream of occurrence," "happenings" in motion and in time. Salts crystallize and dissolve; layers of calcium carbonate accrete to form a pearl, which in time is dropped back into the sea; "molecules" under heat and pressure are rearranged to form gemstones, and the same forces "de-crystallize" marble to "chalk" (606). The gem formation and chemical synthesis in "Press Release," the salts that dissolve and recrystallize in "A Downward Look" and "An Upward Look," the materials that undergo melting, cooling, and metamorphic or synthetic rearrangement in "A Look Askance," "Volcanic Holiday," "Alabaster," and "The Pyroxenes" all model an ongoing alternation between the achieved gem and the temporal dissolution out of which it arises and to which it returns. With its dynamic interaction of random fragments and ordered mirrors that create the appearance of symmetrical patterns—gemlike arrangements realized only momentarily—the kaleidoscope that appears in "Press Release" (638) offers one version of this process and a striking image of how the volume balances the aleatory and the constructed.[9]

Haunted by AIDS, Merrill in *A Scattering of Salts* is more aware than ever of the contingency of innocence, and more resolved to continue to build it anew. AIDS is a quiet but pervasive presence in the volume. It is there when a "computer virus" strikes the poet's laptop (635) and when "patrician cells await / Invasion by barbaric viruses" (641), when "The Monster" speaks from a Scottish loch—"They have diagnosed my presence, never found me. A shape-shifter, I mutate, I metastasize" (630)—and when "unheard ambulances" threaten to "wake the gray sleeper" (662). It is both an internal threat and a "Great Plague" (643) affecting a broader community. Linking sex and death, AIDS presents a compound, formidable challenge to innocence. Eros has long been a form of innocence in Merrill's poetry, the recurrence of love a "triumph of hope over experience" (Vendler 46), but AIDS shadows eros with illness and death. In the 1990s homosexuality no longer represented, as it did in the 1950s, "the worst iniquity," in Merrill's words, "my parents (and many of my friends) could imagine" (*Recitative* 80), but AIDS threatens to redemonize it in the popular imagination.[10] These late poems must work to acknowledge how AIDS alters the erotic landscape without allowing love to be wholly infected with fear or guilt. These concerns form in part the pressures under which Merrill achieves his knowing innocence, an innocence that includes eros and death. Death is one among many chemical and geological processes he imagines working transformations between the organic and the inorganic: chemical reactions, atoms and molecules cross and recross the boundary between living and dead. In Thom Gunn's *The Man with Night Sweats,* death cuts off such interchange: friends' deaths from AIDS leave the speaker frozen in a marble block, an unfinished sculpture. "Abandoned incomplete," he writes, "I find no escape / Back to the constant play of give and change" (80). Merrill's stones themselves display the give and change that the poet strives to maintain in the face of his own turning to stone. Acknowledging that, in Eliot's words, "Every poem [is] an epitaph," the volume also emphasizes that "Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning" (Eliot, *Poems* 208).

Insistently temporal, the volume's innocence comes into being at the intersection of forward- and backward-looking impulses; it is as involved with death as it is with childhood. In "Alabaster," a Dickinsonian slant of sunlight catches a marble tabletop so

> That its translucent inset glows,
>
> Mild, otherworldly, from the underside.
> As once in love or infancy
> Yesterday's cargo—pine cone, junk mail, key—
> Floats on a milky tide,
> Grime-swirled, with blood-pink glimmerings. For me
> The time I dread
>
> Is coming, thinks the table. (*Poems* 606)

"Yet" for "Long minutes after dawn, whatever weighs / Upon me light / Bears up." An "otherworldly" glow makes beautiful and satisfying, but ultimately does not alter, the conditions of bodily existence; when Merrill brings stone to life, he makes it not spirit but flesh: milk, blood, grime. The innocence evoked, "As once in love and infancy," is an embodied one. Under these conditions, although the "minutes" of grace are "long," they will yield to "a starless night." In Dickinson, we recall, "Alabaster Chambers" are tombs.

The balance shifts in other poems. Some are preoccupied with the past, others with an ephemeral present or with the courage needed to face the future; varying temporal emphases yield new metaphors and different combinations of hope and "dread," "life fizzing up again" (649) and death's shadow. In "Pearl" (665) innocence is elusive, the wonder of childhood is lost, and the poem as pearl depends on casting off the mortal body. "Pearl" responds to time with a double movement that parallels the volume's models of geological melting and metamorphosing, chemical dissolving and crystallizing, and kaleidoscopic motion. This double movement involves multiple crossings between past and present, crossings that, like the passing of time figured by the back and forth motion of a clock's pendulum, are both destructive and creative, both honest about time's losses and wishing to make gains of them. The poem's form is symmetrical, taking an hourglass shape on the page and rhyming the first and last of its 31 lines, the second and thirtieth, and so on.[11] Rhymed lines match also in length (indicated by indentation); the central (sixteenth) line is the shortest, consisting of the two words "Of grit" and rhyming with the first and last. The hourglass recalls two earlier poems, "Hourglass" from *First Poems* (in which each stanza took the characteristic shape) and "Hourglass II" from *The Yellow Pages*.[12] Like them, "Pearl" is preoccupied with time's irreversibility, but the later poem replaces the flowing sands of time with an "angry grain of sand" and its slow transformation into a pearl. In that form, however, it remains suggestive of loss, becoming, in a description of the final scene of "Sasha Guitry's classic *Perles de la Courronne,"* the "Gem swaying like a pendulum" from the hand of the "hero," who, having "tracked down / His prize," accidentally drops it overboard into the sea. Although innocence in "Pearl" depends on Blakean vision rather than an idealized view of childhood, it is nonetheless threatened by time.

In the opening lines the third person distances the speaker's childhood self, characterized by the knowledge he lacks, which the speaker provides:

> Well, I admit
> A small boy's eyes grew rounder and lips moister
> To find it invisibly chained, at home in the hollow
> Of his mother's throat: the real, deepwater thing.
> Far from the mind at six to plumb
> X-raywise those glimmering lamplit

Asymmetries to self-immolating mite
Or angry grain of sand
Not yet proverbial.

This childhood self, "at home" with his mother, captivated by beauty but "Not yet" cognizant of its gritty reality, has been lost. As an adult, although he retains the pearl, the speaker has lost the mother:

Yet his would be the hand
Mottled with survival—
She having slipped (how? when?) past reach—
That one day grasped it.

In the last lines, the hero of the film loses the pearl he has sought and found; it drops into the sea

Where an unconscious world, my yawning oyster,
Shuts on it.

The waters of Lethe—the self's forgetfulness or unconsciousness, the inhuman world's indifference—close over an irretrievable "Gem," "Sign," pearl of "wisdom," "trophy," "prize." Although the pearl in the film is not the pearl seen in childhood, parallel descriptions as "wisdom's trophy" and hero's "prize," as well as the symmetry of the poem's form, conflate the two. What had been carefully evoked, from its "glimmering lamplit / Asymmetries" to the slow accretion of "Skin upon skin," is gone; like the cherished souvenir of time travel in "Novelettes" that "Falls [. . .] through cloud-shreds," the pearl is "past retrieval" (625).

But as that last punning phrase from "Novelettes" suggests, the gain found through loss is the gain to the work: the poem as pearl. As the "small boy's eyes grew rounder and lips moister," containing its rhyme "oyster," the poet opens himself to ("admit[s]") that "early mote / Of grit" at the center of the poem. Where the sea "Shuts on" the pearl, he shuts on the mote to generate the poem. Earlier, the "last shot" of *Perles de la Couronne* is "One layer, so to speak, of calcium carbonate / That formed in me." The figure suggests the conclusion to *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism,* where Eliot quotes A. E. Housman's description of the writing of poetry as a "secretion" "like the pearl in the oyster" (138) and reminds us of Shakespeare's sea change: "those are pearls that were his eyes" (139). Transforming organic to inorganic—the poet to the poem—the process leaves the art object as gem.

Neither Eliot nor Merrill suggests that such secretion is passive. If poetic creation requires openness, receptivity, and simply "Time," it requires also "X-ray" vision, "wit," and the wisdom not "to gloat / In verdict over the shucked, outsmarted meat"—as if the soul as pearl could cast off the body—and not, like the film's hero, "all suavity and wit," to be complacent about "wisdom's trophy." The poet's "hand" in the first half is matched by the hero's in the second; to "gras[p]" the pearl is to understand that everything we grasp slips through our fingers. It slips past retrieval, yet the poet invites us to "man the camera, follow" its descent, and in evoking childhood the poem performs a partial retrieval of the past. In the poem's second movement, whereby losses become gains, the finality of "Shuts on it" evokes Yeats's sense that when a poem is finished it "comes right with a click like a closing box" (*Letters* 24),[13] but that formal satisfaction does not compensate for the sense of loss with which the poem ends. The pearl's extraction depends on the oyster's death, and the poem's first use of the first person indirectly identifies the poet with the cast-off shell. Inorganic itself, yet produced within and by a living creature whose death releases it, the pearl can seem an uncomfortably close analogy for the poem.

We might decide that whether loss and gain balance one another or whether the poem, like the mother's pearl, is characterized by "Asymmetries" is a question of vision. With that "angry grain of sand / Not yet proverbial," that "mote / Of grit" at the center of the poem, Merrill invokes the now-proverbial vision of Blake's "Auguries of Innocence": "To see a World in a Grain of Sand / And a Heaven in a Wild Flower / Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand / And Eternity in an hour" (490). But how elusive that vision is. The child, we recall, could not see the sand in the pearl; nor would the sand "Not yet proverbial" suggest to him either a world or the gem of Blake's "Mock on Mock on Voltaire Rousseau" (to the visionary "every sand becomes a Gem / Reflected in the beams divine" [477]). Does the poet succeed where the child did not? He has certainly "grasped" the difficulty of "holding" anything. That word appears in reference to the film's hero, described as

> holding forth, that summer night,
> At the ship's rail, all suavity and wit,
> Gem swaying like a pendulum
> From his fing—oops!

But Blake's suggestive lines do not, after all, advocate that sort of over-confident grasping; they encourage the mind to expand, not the hand to contract. Merrill's "X-ray" vision draws in and expands out, crossing and recrossing to see the sand buried in the pearl, the hourglass implied by the sand, the "pendulum" formed by the "Gem swaying," and the poem as the pearl that forms within and outlasts the bodily self. The poet of "Pearl" is "X-ray wise" in tracing the crossings between abstract and concrete, childhood and adulthood, loss and gain, and in enabling us to "follow" them through the "camera" lens of his rigorously double vision. But where in "Alabaster" "a milky tide" sustained embodied innocence for "Long minutes," the fulcrum of "Pearl" is that "mote / Of grit" admitted, transformed, and lost in a process that abandons the body as "shucked, outsmarted meat," a process that, despite the hourglass form, we recognize as irreversible.

While "Pearl" evokes the difficult, elusive vision of Blakean innocence, "Volcanic Holiday" (617–18) pursues in Keatsian and Wordsworthian terms the relations between temporality, art, and passion. The poem's form—seven stanzas of seven lines rhyming across stanzas—embodies the process whereby lived experience is overlaid with subsequent contemplation; the pattern becomes apparent only through temporal layering. At the same time, the poem wrestles with art's fidelity to present emotion. It demands, and finds, alternatives to both the Grecian Urn and Wordsworth's "spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion . . . recollected in tranquility" (*Lyrical Ballads* 246) in the way it imagines art's response to time. It does this most conspicuously beginning in stanzas 5 and 6:

> 5
> Adolescence, glowering unkissed:
> The obstacle course yearning
> Grew strong in. Cheek to cliff face, sheer devotion . . . .
> To be loved back, then, would have been to die.
> Then, not now. Show me the tomb
> Whose motto and stone lyre compete
> With this life-giving fever. As it fades
>
> 6
> From the Zen chapel comes that song by Liszt.
> Is love a dream? A burning,
> Then a tempering? Beyond slopes gone ashen,
> Rifts that breathe gas, rivers that vitrify,

> Look! A bough falters into bloom.
> Twin rainbows come and go, discreet,
> As when together we haunt virgin glades.

Conjuring the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," the speaker chooses breathing human passion over art's eternal presence, translating the moment of Keatsian "yearning" into the description of an adolescent "glowering unkissed" for whom "To be loved back [. . .] would have been to die." The youthful exaggeration—a version of innocence now outgrown—doubles as a gloss on Keats's urn, whose lovers, stilled in art, can never kiss but are by the same token immortal, immune to a "burning forehead." Merrill's speaker chooses the "fever" of experience, fully aware of its brevity: no sooner is the fever affirmed than it begins to fade. In the context of AIDS, where to love and "be loved back" may mean "to die," the celebration of "this life-giving fever" is a courageous one. The inorganic processes that follow the volcano's eruption suggest death ("slopes gone ashen") or at least an end to motion ("rivers that vitrify"). "Beyond" them, the poet imagines new life and new innocence. His "twin rainbows" attest to love's renewal (rather than, like the solitary Wordsworthian rainbow whose coming and going they repeat with a difference, dimly reflecting lost glory). Yet Merrill also qualifies hope for that renewal: "As when together we haunt virgin glades" combines a wish for a new beginning, an emotional virginity, with the fear that the lovers are ghosts of their former selves.

"Is love a dream?" the speaker asks, "A burning, / Then a tempering?" Love cannot burn with a steady gemlike flame; the heart and the self are tempered, hardened like steel by heating and immersion in a process that parallels the volcanic eruption, cooling, and solidifying suggested by the title. This volcanic process evokes Wordsworth's much-quoted definition of poetry in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. Defining poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings . . . recollected in tranquility," Wordsworth adds: "Now the music of harmonious metrical language, the sense of difficulty overcome, and the blind association of pleasure" taken from similar literary works, "all these imperceptibly make up a complex feeling of delight, which is of the most important use in tempering the painful feeling which will always be found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions" (266–67). Art tempers loss with aesthetic pleasure. Yet at the same time, Merrill's poem hints that to see through love's burning straight to its fading—to see through "passion" in the first stanza to its rhyming "ashen" in the sixth—may hasten that fading; seeing present emotion as future art may destroy innocence as receptivity, wonder, and good faith in love. To look forward, as the last stanza does, to looking back at—and writing about—emotion risks missing the experience in the present.

Merrill avoids that risk here:

> 7
> Moments or years hence, having reminisced,
> May somebody discerning
> Arrive at tranquil words for . . . mere emotion?
> Meanwhile let green-to-midnight shifts of sky
> Fill sliding mirrors in our room
> —No more eruptions, they entreat—
> With Earth's repose and Heaven's masquerades.

Attributing the future "tranquil words" to "somebody discerning," he acknowledges that the person who remembers emotion is not the person who experienced it. However, even as he imagines that "somebody" in the future may reminisce, he registers passion's power and immediacy through the speaker's present inability, indicated by the ellipsis and wondering question mark, to find for it adequate "tranquil words."

"Meanwhile" returns us to the present, yet Merrill acknowledges that the present itself must be imagined in order to be experienced, at least in poetry: to render it he uses not the present tense but the subjunctive "let."[14] "Volcanic Holiday" ends in a reflective yet dynamic state, not with "more eruptions" but with "green-to-midnight shifts of sky" filling "sliding mirrors." Those mirrors, shifting as in a kaleidoscope, suggest a more dynamic model for art than "tranquil" recollection or the "cold pastoral" of static representation. This art matches the movement of time in the world of experience ("shifts of sky") with movement of its own. In its "shifts" of tone and image from stanza to stanza and its rapid evocation of the self's development from Keatsian "yearning" through a celebration of love's "life-giving fever" even "As it fades" to a pastoral renewal of love to a cool future and back to an uncertain and dynamic present, the poem enacts that controlled yet responsive motion. On "Earth," the end of love and of life is stillness or "repose," but art enacts the "masquerades" in which experience finds its afterlife or "Heaven."

Merrill figures the adolescent yearnings evoked (and outgrown) in "Volcanic Holiday" in terms of the Paterian ideal—"To burn always with a hard, gemlike flame"—in his memoir *A Different Person* (1993), an account of his coming of agė as a poet and a gay man. Recounting a crucial point in his psychoanalysis, he recalls his persistent desire "never to break faith with the pure, gemlike feelings of adolescence lest [he] turn, like Dorian Gray, into a hideous and corrupt thirty-year-old" (183). His fear of corruption and his changing Pater's "hard" flame to a "pure" one suggest that what he idealized in those adolescent feelings was innocence. With the help of his analyst, the memoir records, the 25-year-old Merrill recognized that this ideal was keeping him from growing up. In *A Scattering of Salts,* Merrill transforms this "pure," unchanging innocence. Returning with a difference to the Paterian adjective, the poet of "Press Release" (638–40) reflects, "Gemlike projects keep forming deep within / Our mine. Under what pressures?" The need to keep faith yields to the participle "keep forming," static endurance to a process of destruction and renewal. Adolescence's purity is replaced with a mature partnership ("Our mine") that is both creative and erotic.[15]

"Press Release" begins by comparing the laboratory crystallization of a "new synthetic substance" to a sexual initiation, and ends by imagining first the compound's dissolving, then its recrystallizing in a new form, the "lovers' knot" of two Alpine climbers clasping hands. In between, it records and enacts motion, change, and chemical and artistic rearrangements of elements into new but impermanent constructions. These constructions, "Gemlike projects" of which the poem is one, form in "Our mine"; the closeness of that phrase to "our mind" and the pun on "mine" suggest that the seemingly solitary work of artistic production merges (as in *The Changing Light at Sandover*) with the collaborative work of love. In figuring sexual love as a process both scientific and creative, Merrill may have in mind Stendhal's *De l'amour*, which calls love a crystallization: Stendhal develops the metaphor by describing a bare tree branch thrown into a salt mine, retrieved, after two or three months' exposure to the damp saline atmosphere, covered with *"petits cristaux mobiles et éblouissants"* (4: 287) next referred to as diamonds.[16] In Merrill's hands, the image appears particularly appropriate to homosexual love, which here as in *The Changing Light* brings forth art—the poem as gem, formed under the pressures that the punning title's first word suggests—rather than children. But AIDS means that love may also bring death. The poem responds to the intensified brevity of this Paterian short day of frost and sun, the rapid transformation of the organic to the inorganic, by incorporating the inorganic in its own gemlike character. But "Press Release" is not a steady flame or only a multifaceted gem; its intricate form embodies the ongoing yet discrete transformations it describes, rearranging elements, alternating between fluid "solution" and crystalline compound. In its kaleidoscopic form, its crystallizations and dissolutions, "Press Release" is a "solution" (though one whose equilibrium is threatened by the next "turn / Of the kaleidoscope") to the problem of innocence within experience.

The opening lines announce a chemical crystallization next figured as a sexual initiation:

> Now comes word that a new synthetic substance
> Crystallized in Sacramento for the first time.
> After much coaxing. These virgin substances
> Don't know how. Or it "hurts" like the first time
> You were kissed by a man. From then on, each time
> Gets easier and perhaps—with crystals, who knows?—
> More pleasurable. Soon this enlightened substance,
> Its code (so to speak) cracked, its maidenhead taken,
> Unblinkingly reenacts, time after time,
>
> And in remote labs, a rite of passage unknown
> Two weeks ago.

Analogous to the creation of a new substance, this initiation is more a beginning (the birth of the sexual self, of pleasure and enlightenment) than an end (to some idealized state of virginity or negatively defined innocence). In the penultimate stanza, Merrill returns to the chemical model, using it to ask whether, after a more negative transformation or diminishment, a positive renewal—of love, of youthful energy, of health—is possible. When "long lank threads of polypeptide" have been "untied / Ribbonwise," "Their one hope" is to take up "postures" of "preternatural / Kinkiness, as in yoga," shapes "like our lovers' knot" which, in turn like a crystal, "One dawn will glitter from a further peak." Like the loss of innocence at the beginning of the poem, the renewal of "hope" and strength is figured as both destructive ("untied," "denatured") and creative (the "new synthetic substance" crystallizes, the "polypeptide[s]" fold into complex, organized structures). In the words of Yeats's Crazy Jane, "Nothing can be sole or whole / That has not been rent," but as the prefixes "syn-" and "poly-" suggest, Merrill is more interested in the multiple and composite than in the Yeatsian sole and whole. Further, the poem's rapid transitions show the impossibility of coming to rest in any achieved state, however tightly knotted or strenuously achieved.

These lines exemplify the "rapid" shifts that characterize the poem as a whole, both thematically and formally. The "new synthetic substance" crystallizes and "polypeptide[s]" are "denatured"; "Gemlike projects keep forming deep inside / Our mine"; "the clabber of rapids / Under the bridge reanimate[s], refigure[s] / The inert shadows we cast"; "Innumerable [. . .] traits / Reorient themselves" within the individual; "a turn / Of the kaleidoscope" gives rise to startling shifts of "vision." Merrill matches discursive changes with frequent shifts of metaphor and, further, enacts formally the model of kaleidoscopic change that the poem invokes. The nine nine-line stanzas involve repetitions of end words, but these are often repetitions with a difference: corresponding end words take on different forms (plurals, varied verb forms, negatives—as when "know" becomes "unknown" or "fit" "unfitted"), or are used in different idiomatic expressions ("at a turn," "turn the light on," "wrong turnings"; "happy to be worked," "at work," "in the works"), or share a purely homophonic connection ("Hallowtide," "untied," "polypeptide"; "fits," "counterfeit"; "side," "suicides"; "concentrate," "traits"). Words, like atoms, combine in different ways to produce new compounds, and such changes take their place among the myriad changes that the poem both records and creates. Using chance shiftings among verbal elements to create a highly organized structure, the poem is kaleidoscopic. The self is no less so: in the last stanza, "Innumerable [. . .] traits / Reorient themselves within the substance / He has contracted to become."

Eliot's *Four Quartets* provides a model for a kaleidoscopic sort of innocence that bears comparison with Merrill's, though Eliot's religious discourse differs significantly from Merrill's more insistently aesthetic one. In lines that describe a radically kaleidoscopic vision, Eliot rejects the notion of "wisdom" coming with age:

> There is, it seems to us,
> At best, only a limited value
> In the knowledge derived from experience.
> The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,
> For the pattern is new in every moment
> And every moment is a new and shocking
> Valuation of all we have been. (*Poems* 185)

Further, he questions the model of "evolution" as a way to view history, including the history of an individual life:

> It seems, as one becomes older,
> That the past has another pattern, and ceases to be a mere
> sequence—
> Or even development: the latter a partial fallacy
> Encouraged by superficial notions of evolution,
> Which becomes [. . .] a means of disowning the past. (194)

Merrill too questions any easy application of "superficial notions of evolution" to the story of what happens to "substance" in "time" (key end words in the first and last stanza). At the structural center of the poem (the fifth line of the fifth stanza), the speaker seems to accept the evolutionary model, reading that "'Against such dark views [as he has been entertaining], Nature's best provision / Remains the tendency of certain organisms / Long on the verge of extinction to return / At depths or altitudes they had once been unfitted / To endure.'" But to accept the speaker's acceptance is to endorse a Romantic relationship to nature that Merrill ultimately undermines.[17]

The passage from "Nature" to the penultimate stanza's "hope" and the last stanza's "courage" is not a direct one. Numerous transformations intervene, transformations that illustrate the imaginative "work"—labor, but also embellishment—required for hope and courage. In order to crystallize, the "new synthetic substance" requires "much coaxing"; chemistry is "depicted as working" her "sampler" with "a new molecular stitch"; the plans of the lovers ("Gemlike projects") form "Under [. . .] pressures"; the transformation of the individual in the last stanza demands "concentrat[ion]" and "sweat." The creation of the work of art ("Today's nine-sided figure, / Prismatic epitome") is, by implication, equally arduous.

Merrill's "hope," "courage," and renewed innocence are achieved (briefly) only by an active acceptance of the mortality on which nature insists. He counters teleological "notions" of evolution with a model of kaleidoscopic change, suggesting the importance of incorporating the "dark views" of experience:

> Whether you are at my side
> Or off shooting a film, or tigers, or rapids,
> Gemlike projects keep forming deep inside

Our mine. Under what pressures? Today's nine-sided
Figure, prismatic epitome, may at a turn
Of the kaleidoscope—nightfall is rapid
In these parts—yield to a fly's faceted vision
Hatching a micromorgue of suicides

From one poor sleeper. Buzzed awake, he turns
The light on—ah, how old! Who could have envisioned
Twenty years' loneliness, ill health, wrong turnings?
He opens a book, squinting to clear his vision:
"Against such dark views, Nature's best provision
Remains the tendency of certain organisms
Long on the verge of extinction to return
At depths or altitudes they had once been unfitted
To endure. . ."

The plain language of "Twenty years' loneliness, ill health, wrong turnings" contrasts with the more elaborate syntax and figuration of the previous stanza, suggesting that beneath the verbal acrobatics (the play on the various meanings of "shooting," the reflexive reference to the "nine-sided / Figure" which is both gem and poem, the metaphor of the kaleidoscope) remains the plain truth of age, illness, regrets. Further, the echoes at work—of Blake's "The Fly" and "The Tyger" (its fearfully imagined "distant deeps or skies" behind these evolutionary depths or altitudes) and Dickinson's "I heard a Fly buzz" (223)—deepen the darkness that has fallen.[18] To the personal suffering of "loneliness, ill health, wrong turnings," such echoes add a "dark view" of human existence in which tiger devours lamb; God is remote, blind, or even malevolent; death is absolute; experience vanquishes innocence.

Although the speaker seems to recover from this moment of crisis in the next lines, we soon see that what has been offered "'Against such dark views'" is not adequate:

Eyes shut in all but visionary

Consent, he lets the words reorganize
Everything he lives for, until it all fits
Or until he forgets them. What's the inorganic
Teardrop in Bulgari's window to *these* fits
And flashes of blankness?

"Eyes shut," the speaker is still in darkness like the speaker of "I heard a Fly buzz": "And then the Windows failed—and then / I could not see to see—" (224). His passivity might describe a positive receptivity to new perspectives or arrangements—particularly linguistic ones—but for the anticlimax that follows: "until it all fits / Or until he forgets them." "[*T*]*hese* fits / And flashes of blankness" remind the speaker "how old" he has grown, and reduce the gem—already diminished from the aesthetic ecstasy of Pater's gemlike flame to the item for sale in the jeweler's window—to blinding flashes of memory loss. If the speaker's innocence is to "return," it will do so not by forgetting death but by incorporating mutabiliy.

In the last stanzas, Merrill achieves a precarious balance between innocence and experience.

> Solutions whereby molecules are untied
> Ribbonwise, or (to quote the technician) "denatured,"
> Enervate the long lank threads of polypeptide.
> Their one hope then's the prompt recall to nature,
> To postures even of some preternatural
> Kinkiness, as in yoga. Or like our lovers' knot.
> Looming through psychic azure—woe betide
> Its severer!—it also, if we concentrate,
> One dawn will glitter from a further peak. In nature,
>
> To reach the pass, you must follow, like it or not,
> Trails of loam and caustic. By concentrating
> On flamework overhead, ice to sun slipknotted,
> Each climber sweats his own salt concentrate
> Of courage. Innumerable, faster-stabbing traits
> Reorient themselves within the substance
> He has contracted to become. So let us not
> Act like children. These are the Alps. High time
> For the next deep breath. My hand. Hold. Concentrate.

Although, as Vendler observes, these lines suggest Wordsworth's crossing of the Alps in book 6 of *The Prelude,* Merrill's climb is different from Wordsworth's infinite upward movement ("Our destiny, our nature and our home / Is with infinitude—and only there" [216]). Once Wordsworth has crossed the Alps, "thenceforward all our course / Was downwards," a disappointment that must be "usurp[ed]" by the "Imagination!—lifting up itself / Before the eye and progress of my song" (216); in Merrill, the imagination works to include both the high and the low. Merrill achieves this range in part by locating himself and his art "In nature,"—a very different nature from Wordsworth's. That phrase is stressed by its position as an extra foot at the end of the penultimate stanza, the only stanza that uses the Spenserian hexameter for its last line.[19] The changing forms of the end word *nature*—"our natures"; "'denatured'"; "recall to nature"; "preternatural"; "In nature"—express a complex dynamic interchange between nature and art. (Merrill's changes to the root *organ*—"organisms"; "reorganize"; "inorganic"; "organ-/ Grinding"—do something similar.) Although he neither relies on nature for spiritual guidance nor translates natural into moral evolution, Merrill, unlike the Yeats of "Sailing to Byzantium," does not desire to move "out of nature." Yeats's later "images that yet / Fresh images beget" (*Poems* 249) could well describe the shifting metaphors of "Press Release," not least in the suggestion of bodily reproduction, which distinguishes Merrill's and Yeats's models for the imagination from Wordsworth's "unfathered vapor" (*Prelude* 216). In "Press Release," love, birth, and death (even when metaphorical) are situated in the body, as they are throughout the volume. In "Alabaster," the innocence possessed "once in love or infancy" returns as "a milky tide, / Grime-swirled, with blood-pink glimmerings"; here "courage" is rooted in "loam and caustic," "substance" and "sweat." The embodiment of Merrill's Alpine climb is striking; there is no sweat in Wordsworth.

Loam and caustic might be thought of as the conditions of existence: the one an especially fertile soil, life-giving; the other a burning substance that destroys living tissue. While the end of "Press Release" puts "hope" and "courage" together with dread and despair, neither Vendler's nor Shetley's reading, it seems to me, places enough emphasis on the presence of death or the "dark views" that persist to define the achieved "courage" (the pressure that leads to the qualified release). Here as earlier, intertextual echoes deepen the darkness; our experience as readers of the texts to which Merrill alludes is part of the experience that must be faced and included. "Ice to sun slipknotted" suggests the rapid melting implied by Pater's "short day of frost and sun"; "flamework" and "ice" conjure the humorous but dark view of the powers of desire and hate in Frost's "Fire and Ice"; the image also perhaps recalls Shelley's "Mont Blanc," where, at the summit, "many a precipice / Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power / Have piled: dome, pyramid, and pinnacle, / A city of death, distinct with many a tower / And wall impregnable of beaming ice" (92). Moreover, if sweat suggests the embodiment of Merrill's climb, it also suggests the night sweats of AIDS. What the speaker "has contracted" is a disease that may lead to death. Merrill does not reach for a transcendent "home [. . .] with infinitude"; he accepts his diminishments, his contraction, without giving in to them. His Alpine crossing is no less courageous—indeed it is more courageous—for refusing to subordinate "substance" to spirit, body to mind.

Yet the end of "Press Release" also evokes a beginning. A meditation on the number nine in the voice of WHA (Merrill's Auden) near the end of *Scripts for the Pageant* suggests that the poem's nine-line stanzas point to both birth and death:

> 9 MY DEARS? THE BIRTHING MONTH   THE STAGE
> B4 THE OVAL ENIGMA: LIFE'S INDRAWN
> BREATH, THE BASIN WHERE OUR OLD SELVES DROWN.
> ARABIC 9 (AS ON YR TRANSCRIPT PAGE)
> FACE AVERTED FROM THE CIPHER LOOKS
> BACK ON THE LONG ROAD TRAVELLED. ROMAN IX
> SERVES FOR US: ONE FOOTSTEP FROM THE CRUX
> OF TIME WE STAND POISED WAITING TO LEAP IN
> (*Changing Light* 509)

In the last three lines WHA refers to the new lives that await him and Maria after stage nine, but his words could apply also to the living human "poised" before death. Through WHA's play on the shapes of the symbols for nine, the number, like Merrill in *A Scattering,* looks both to the past and to the future, both fearing death ("FACE AVERTED FROM THE CIPHER") and creating the future in an artistic process of "birthing."

If we should "not / Act like children," an echo of Stevens's late poem "The Desire to Make Love in a Pagoda" helps to define what innocence might nonetheless mean in the last stanza, in the context of love and death:

> In the first inch of night, the stellar summering
> At three-quarters gone, the morning's prescience,
>
> As if, alone on a mountain, it saw far off
> An innocence approaching toward its peak.   (456)

Stevens's conjunction of "the first inch of night" and "the morning's prescience" happens in the imagination, in the "As if." His "innocence" is located in that imaginative future, "approaching" but still "far off." In "The Auroras of Autumn," a season "lavishing [. . .] itself in change" (359) prefigures the incessant change of "Press Release," as Stevens acknowledges that death "may come tomorrow, . . . / Almost as a part of innocence" (362) and prefigures Merrill's approach to death, which may be what is about to be. In Bloom's words about "Auroras," "innocence is [. . .] dialectical and involves holding the imagination open to death" (277). In "The Desire to Make Love in a Pagoda" as in *A Scattering,* innocence arises only in the context of change. Stevens's "innocence approaching to its peak" anticipates Merrill's lovers' knot that "One dawn will glitter from a further peak."

Because this complex innocence knows death and the desire and danger of making love, we are told "let us not / Act like children." But the gesture of clasping hands with which the poem ends—"My hand. Hold. Concentrate"—complicates this exhortation. Especially to help with a difficult climb or crossing, the gesture is appropriate to "children" or to an adult and a child, as the hand is extended both to offer help and to seek it. At the same time, the echoes of Keats's "This living hand" (384) and Blake's "The Tyger" ("What the hand dare seize the fire?", "what dread grasp / Dare its deadly terrors clasp?" [24]) make the hand powerful, potentially dangerous, suggestive of death. The hand is both the physical hand of the lover, standing for the body by means of which we love, and that of the artist, reaching out to the reader even from beyond the grave. The "Concentrate" of poet and reader, as the latter matches the former's concentration on the poem, may itself be, in one sense, a "new synthetic substance."[20] The connection that is conjured by the invitation to join hands modulates the isolation of "Each climber" perspiring in solitary labor "his own salt concentrate / Of courage." Both love and art, at their best, succeed in sharing the individual's subjective vision.

The "lovers' knot" that "One dawn will glitter from a further peak" distances love in time and place. Like this knot (whose "severer" is anticipated), like the formation and denaturing of crystals, like the weaving and unweaving of ourselves, the clasping of hands is impermanent: the two words of the poem's title suggest that the moment of contact is followed by the moment of letting go. Merrill does not let us forget that (in

Eliot's words) "the pattern is new in every moment / And every moment is a new and shocking / Valuation of all we have been"; "a turn / Of the kaleidoscope" changes everything. The final gesture embodies the willingness both to make the "perilous crossing" (Merrill, *Poems* 619), to clasp the hand of death, and to press with a child's trust the hand extended by love while foreseeing its release.

The volume's last poem, "An Upward Look" (674), confronts the conjunction of the hand of love and the hand of death in the case of HIV infection. The close of "Press Release" evokes the self's contraction to mere "substance," yet separates the third-person self from the first person plural, the pair who continue imaginatively to climb. "An Upward Look" goes beyond that threshold to look upward from within the grave and to accept even a death from AIDS as "a part of innocence" (Stevens 362). It begins after love's end:

> O heart green acre   sown with salt
> by the departing   occupier
>
> lay down your gallant   spears of wheat
> Salt of the earth   each stellar pinch
>
> flung in blind   defiance backwards
> now takes its toll

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The erotic self has been put to pasture; the heart has become a Yeatsian acre of grass. But this field has been salted. Generating electrical impulses, salt has kept the heart beating; superstitiously flung backward, it brought luck; but it "now takes its toll," figuring as a "departing occupier"'s strategy for making "earth" and its anagram "heart" barren. Although we may hear "tears" in "spears," and taste them in salt, the alteration of nourishing ears of wheat into destructive "spears" is more than a chronicle of love and loss. As destructive seeds "sown" by a love affair and leading to the grave, this poem's salts are, among other things, a deadly infection—a high "toll" indeed.[21]

Calling the lover a "departing occupier" introduces war or military invasion as a metaphor for both love and disease.[24] From an occupying soldier—Cupid's arrows converted to spears—the lover next turns tiger:

Up from his quieted

quarry the lover   colder and wiser
hauling himself   finds the world turning

toys triumphs   toxins into
this vast facility   the living come
dearest to die in   How did it happen

Blake's question in "The Tyger," "When the stars threw down their spears / And water'd heaven with their tears, / Did he smile his work to see? / Did he who made the lamb make thee?" (25), haunts these lines. In a world where erotic experience is also deadly, lover and beloved become innocent victim and corrupting source of infection. AIDS becomes the marker of a new fallen era; as Sontag writes, the years preceding its advent appear in retrospect "a lost age of innocence" (76). In a world of temporality, too, experience devours innocence: in this dizzying "turning," the earth's rotation becomes a factory consuming the raw materials of life and producing only death. Not least of the poem's "triumphs" will be to find imaginative means by which to escape the oppositional logic of lamb and tiger, innocence and its destroyer.

These means involve the creation of a temporal hybridity:

In bright alternation   minutely mirrored
within the thinking   of each and every

mortal creature   halves of a clue
approach the earthlights

These lines illuminate the poem's form: its two-part lines and central spiral of white space suggest the double helix of DNA, blueprint for every living creature, encoding the "clue" to life's renewal as well as to its "mortal" limits.[23] In conception, the parents' DNA—"halves of a clue"—combines in their child. In the context of disease established by the poem's opening lines, this process also suggests one that is analogous but opposed: in infection, viral genetic material combines with the host's, resulting in offspring of a sort in the form of new viruses. (Merrill's "vast facility" of death echoes medical language that describes viruses converting their host cells into factories producing more viruses; the poem's form might further suggest the body's openness, its vulnerability to penetration and infection.[24]) Yet from another point of view, conception produces death no less than infection may: the innocent newborn "creature" that results is "mortal." Life and death are as intertwined as two strands of the double helix. Merrill's double vision works here against the negative metaphoric potential of AIDS's sexual transmission and its perceived link with homosexuality—the homophobic idea that in the era of AIDS homosexuality breeds death as heterosexual conception breeds life.[25] He acknowledges AIDS's specificity, but ultimately treats it as part of a broader mortality.

This movement away from AIDS as a fall from innocence or an indicator of guilt has already begun at the poem's "turning" point, the tercet preceded and followed by four couplets. The imagery of infection and of lover as tiger yields to a recognition of temporality as the true predator—one that is innocent of intent or responsibility. When the lover "finds the world turning," his look "Up" comes close to catching time in the act. His bafflement ("How did it happen") recalls "The Book of Ephraim"'s reflection on the end of Proust's novel: "A world abruptly old, whitehaired, a reader / Looking up in puzzlement to fathom / Whether ten years or forty have gone by." (When "Young," JM found this "foreshortening . . . unconvincing"; older, he affirms it as "truth instead / Babbling through his own astonishment" [*Changing Light* 70–71].) The transformations caused by disease—the salted field and blighted wheat—are subsumed into "the world turning" even as that turning is acknowledged as life "turning into" death. Merrill's word games—turning "heart" into "earth" and "ears" into "spears," mining "salt" for its wealth of denotations and figurative uses—match time's entropic transformations with the mind's creative ones: metaphor, linguistic play. The imagination's "triumphs" over time are qualified, embedded in temporality (as the word "triumphs" appears for a moment between "toys" and "toxins"). Merrill's linguistic rearrangements at once reflect truthfully time's irreversible progress and find space for the mind's serious play, a form of innocence.

At the poem's end, the salts conceived as destructive at its beginning dissolve and recrystallize to suggest the reviving power of smelling salts, the liveliness, freshness, and wit that salt figuratively gives.

Morning star

evening star   salt of the sky
First the grave   dissolving into dawn

then the crucial   recrystallizing
from inmost depths   of clear dark blue

Blake's fearful symmetry becomes the beautiful symmetry of a crystal as the terrifying turning is answered by the kaleidoscopic turns of the imagination. But the poem's resolution depends on a radical acceptance of loss; its recrystallization requires the dissolution of the self in the grave. This ending is "crucial" not in the sense of deciding between two rival hypotheses, marking a decisive victory for one or the other, for Merrill's vision is insistently double. It is crucial rather in the chemical sense of being associated with the trying action of a crucible, whose great heat is one way of effecting recrystallization. It is crucial also in resulting in a cross or hybrid, figured by the poem's evocation of the double helix of DNA. Crossing "Morning star" and "evening star,"[26] "dawn" and "dark," Merrill produces a hybrid of these "halves of a clue," ending and beginning, experience and innocence.

As Vendler notes (47–48), this poem's recrystallizing answers the moment in "Alabaster" when "the self," figured as a "tissue-thin" slice of alabaster, cannot "resist, / Broken on terror like a rack, / When waves of nightmare heat decrystallize / Her lucid molecules to chalk" (*Poems* 605). Yet without end punctuation, ending with the vast blue of sea or sky, the poem, and the volume, remain open to dissolving again. The two actions displace each other "In bright alternation," part of a larger temporal process reflected in the poems that frame *A Scattering of Salts:* "A Downward Look," "A Look Askance," "An Upward Look." Positioned, respectively, at the beginning, roughly the middle, and the end of the volume, these three poems structure it, enacting its ongoing processes and dynamic balance. In "A Downward Look" (589) the landscape "Seen from above," marked by "protuberances, faults, / A delta thicket," appears as a figure outstretched in a bath "scattered [. . .] with salts."[27] In "An Upward Look" "salt of the earth" balances "salt of the sky" and "dissolving" is matched by "recrystallizing." "A Look Askance" (637) figures artistic creation as a volcanic eruption ending in the immobile permanence of "stone." In the absence of "Press Release"'s kaleidoscope or "Volcanic Holiday"'s sliding mirrors, "fixed scope" is the "steep cost" of permanence: the poet's writings and his life "pass into this / Fossil state thought up, then idly / Jotted down on stone." Yet the phrase "fixed scope" itself suggests an alternative in the changing perspectives that "A Downward Look" and "An Upward Look" provide. Merrill's vision of landscape as body in "A Downward Look" recalls Auden's in "In Praise in Limestone," and that stone, as "Pharaonate of Lime" and "chalk," as gypsum and calcite, figures in "Alabaster" (604–06). A deep-sea formation composed of fossils and shells, limestone under heat and pressure crystallizes into marble, and when dissolved, forms stalactites and stalagmites, downward and upward recrystallizations. Thus the salts scattered in "A Downward Look," having become living creatures, turn to the "fossil" of "A Look Askance," which turns to stone that in "An Upward Look" dissolves and then recrystallizes, reaching upward from the grave toward the stars. Only at the level of chemical components, life's elemental building blocks, is this process cyclical; as the opening lines of "An Upward Look" rearrange the letters of "heart" to form "earth," so the physical components of the body turn to dust.

As Yeats wrote late in his life, "all that is personal soon rots; it must be packed in ice or salt," and "Ancient salt is best packing" (*Essays* 522–23), advice that Merrill quotes in the 1987 preface to the second edition of *The Seraglio* (*Novels* 631).[28] Yet as "FOOD / FOR THOUGHT," "fuel and stabilizer / Of the body electric" (*Changing Light* 141), salt not only preserves but stimulates life and motion. In Merrill's early verse play *The Birthday,* Mr. Knight, a wizard figure, points out that "A drop of human blood [...] / In chemical proportion is equivalent / To simple seawater" (*Novels* 436). In the late poem "Processional," a magical "polar wand" turns a drop of water into a snowflake, "gemlike, nevermore to melt! // But melt it would" (*Poems* 583). "An Upward Look"'s "crucial recrystallizing" is a promise of new "Gemlike projects" as surely as it is a recognition of the time when these projects will be not the self's but those of "the love // That drew the bath and scattered it with salts," a generative force that "Still radiates new projects old as day" (*Poems* 589). Merrill's crystals and gems are at once a part of blood and sea, and precious constructs poised for a moment beyond their flow. They attest to the imagination's capacity to answer embodiment and mortality not with a dream of transcendent innocence prior to experience or outside of time but with creative, transformative processes. Through these processes, Merrill's innocence, his kaleidoscopic patterns and his achievement of the poem as gem are continuously and strenuously renewed as the poet remakes himself and his work in the future that remains.

Notes

1. "Yes, yes, it comes back. With a difference."

2. "Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe?"

3. J. D. McClatchy finds "longings . . . for the pastoral and primitive, for an idealized childhood and a sentimentalized heroism, the paradises lost to maturity and contingency" in *Divine Comedies* (317); I see such longings neither in that volume nor in any beyond *First Poems.* My position is closer to Harold Bloom's assessment that "Merrill is *not* an elegiac poet" (Introduction 5); he "studies the nostalgias" rather than indulges them (2).

4. "Unorganized Innocence, An impossibility [.] Innocence dwells with Wisdom but never with Ignorance."

5. Bonnie Costello calls this struggle "tragic" (82): "Stevens persists in the longing to 'dwell' in an innocent state, or to 'master' the changes of the temporal world" (85). I place Merrill among the later poets who "see time in less tragic terms" (85).

6. This argument contrasts with Timothy Materer's linking of innocence in *The Changing Light at Sandover* with timelessness. Although Materer acknowledges that Merrill's is "not the Adamic innocence of Emerson and Whitman, which seeks to free the self from history" (111), he goes on to quote Ihab Hassan's *Radical Innocence*—"America has never really acknowledged Time. Its vision of Eden or Utopia is essentially a timeless vision. . . . This is a radical innocence" (Hassan 325)—and asserts that "these words well describe Merrill's poetic vision in *Scripts"* (Materer 112). He further suggests that Merrill seeks innocence as a way to move "beyond his dualism" and beyond aestheticism (12). I see Merrill's innocence as double rather than singular and enabled by, rather than opposed to, the aesthetic. I focus here on innocence in Merrill's last lyric volume, but my claims about innocence extend to the trilogy. My argument differs from the position Vernon Shetley sketches in his review of *A Scattering of Salts.* Shetley compares "Merrill's project" to that of the "Puritan diarist" who examines each day's events, "seeking signs of election"; the poems "seem a persistent test of the writer's nature, in which assurances of his innocence . . . are sought through the confusions of experience and the temptations of self-deception" (40). The desire for innocence does persist in Merrill's work. But Merrill does not seek signs of an enduring purity; his innocence is actively constructed, and his "nature" is not just tested but made and remade in an image that is both contingent and chosen. While Shetley also notes the volume's concern with "Change, transformation, metamorphosis" (40), his discussion of innocence implicitly sets it against change.

7. Willard Spiegelman argues that the trilogy proceeds through complexity to "regain the simplicity of truth," the "reintegration and harmony" of a "higher innocence" (230).

8. Judith Moffett similarly refers to Merrill's "nervous habit of encrusting his early poems with gems" (14) and his tendency to petrify or freeze his subject (5).

9. This rendering of process takes further a practice that critics have noted in earlier volumes. Lynn Keller writes, "To the extent that Merrill is willing to point to *a truth,* it is," as for other contemporary poets, "process" (244). Stephen Yenser sees Merrill's poetry begin to incorporate process in *Water Street* and writes of "The Book of Ephraim" that Merrill "seeks [. . .] to turn the destructive flow of time into the creative flow of the imagination" (229). I would add that, by contrast with the emphasis on fluidity in "Ephraim," the poems of *A Scattering of Salts* model art as, and themselves create, a sequence of discrete patterns arising from and returning to flux, yet distinct from it.

10. In an essay on art and AIDS Langdon Hammer writes, "Although the connection between HIV-transmission and gay male sex is only contingent, male homosexuality and AIDS are indissolubly bound in the imaginative constructions of our society. This is the case" in Merrill's and Rich's elegies for David Kalstone, the focus of Hammer's essay, "no less than in the tabloid fantasies of mass culture" (105).

11. The one exception is the juxtaposed "sand" and "hand" (lines 8–9), matched but not perfectly rhymed with *"Couronne"* and "down" (24–25).

12. It also recalls the "ideogram" drawn in lesson 8 of *Scripts for the Pageant: No* (*Changing Light* 474–75), where the double hourglass warns against human use of both atomic energy and fossil fuels (see Yenser 303–04).

13. Whereas the "correction of prose, because it has no fixed laws, is endless, a poem comes right with a click like a closing box."

14. He uses the same strategy earlier in "Verse for Urania," a poem equally concerned with the inadequacy of recollection as a model for poetic creation. In a 1972 interview with David Kalstone, Merrill writes of the present tense in lyric: "For me a 'hot' tense like that can't be handled for very long without cool pasts and futures to temper it" (*Recitative* 21). The end of "Volcanic Holiday" finds an alternative to the hot-cool dichotomy in kaleidoscopic motion.

15. If AIDS provides a new impetus to "link anxieties about male homosexuality with anxieties about the effects of art" (Hammer 105), the degree to which both *A Different Person* and *A Scattering of Salts* resist anxiety and guilt to celebrate homosexuality and the aesthetic is striking.

16. Merrill earlier responded explicitly to this metaphor in the last section of "Variations: The Air Is Sweetest That a Thistle Guards" (*Poems* 22). I am indebted to Shetley for suggesting that "Press Release" evokes "perhaps a crystallization of the sort Stendhal used to describe the process of falling in love" (41).

17. Here I differ with Vendler's view of Merrill's relationship to nature: "in a book on evolution," she writes, the speaker "finds encouragement to hope for a more positive reprise of the moral life on a deeper or higher level"; "Taking Nature's advice, the poet decides to try a new beginning in altitudes he had once been 'unfitted to endure'" (48).

18. The "fly's faceted vision" may also recall the reducing of the sphere of Parmigianino's self-portrait and indeed of the globe to "the gibbous / Mirrored eye of an insect" at the end of Ashbery's "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror" (204).

19. Called to mind by the nine-line stanzas, Spenser informs Merrill's version of nature as well. The Mutabilitie cantos of *The Faerie Queene* are particularly relevant, especially canto 7, which uses *turn* both in the sense of a wheel turning and of transformation:

> For, all that from her springs, and is ybredde,
> How-euer fayre it flourish for a time,
> Yet see we soone decay; and, being dead,
> To turne again vnto their earthly slime:
> Yet, out of their decay and mortall crime,
> We daily see new creatures to arize;
> And of their Winter spring another Prime,
> Vnlike in form, and chang'd by strange disguise:
> So turne they still about, and change in restless wise. (1044)

20. Shetley suggests that "Perhaps the difficult climb to which the poet alludes is an analogy" both for "the work of love" and "also for the reader's difficult encounter with the poem" (41); both processes involve "an inward reorientation that changes ones' substance fundamentally." Shetley stresses that "the poet is there to help, reaching out his hand"; he places the poet higher on the slope. By contrast, William Waters's reading of poetic address in (among other texts) Keats's "This living hand" emphasizes poems' appeal for intimacy, their capacity to transform the reader into the uniquely intended addressee, and the reader's responsibility to "come to the text as if [his] presence mattered to it" (220). To the extent that Merrill's hand is extended to the reader, it seems to me that it is in this more mutual way.

On the other hand, as it were, just as Stendhal's insistence on the novelty of the word *cristallisation* as he is using it resonates with Merrill's invention of a new form and his emphasis on new projects, so Stendhal's belief that readers won't let him get away with this coinage (*"il est fort possible que si cet essai trouve des lecteurs, ils ne me passent pas ce mot nouveau"*) and his willingness to lose those readers (*"J'engage donc le lecteur qui se sentira trop choqué par ce mot de* cristallisation, *à fermer le livre"* [3: 27]) for the select few who will be pleased by it suggests a way of reading Merrill's last word as a challenge: it is a bait for that ideal reader, "that single silver carp" for whom one needn't dynamite the pond (*Recitative* 22).

21. The cost for wild oats sown, for having been, perhaps, salt in the adjectival sense "lecherous, salacious," is excessive—salt in its slang sense "costly, dear" (*OED*).

22. Criticizing what she views as harmful metaphors for disease, and for AIDS in particular (including the military metaphor), Susan Sontag writes:

> the move from the demonization of the illness to the attribution of fault to the patient is an inevitable one, no matter if patients are thought of as victims. Victims suggest innocence. And innocence, by the inexorable logic that governs all relational terms, suggests guilt. (11)

23. An earlier imaginative response to DNA appeared in *Mirabell,* book 6 (*Changing Light* 203). See Kalstone for a discussion of that passage in terms of the "jewels" of Merrill's early work (140).

24. Hammer suggests that spaces perform this function in Rich's elegy for Kalstone (111).

25. Hammer writes of Rich's elegy for Kalstone, "The irreversibility of HIV and its sexual transmission connect infection . . . with human conception—only it is death, not life, that gay male sex breeds" (109). In Merrill's elegy ("Farewell Performance"), by contrast, Hammer argues, "the special 'horror' of AIDS—its linking of sex and death—cannot be confined to the gay man with AIDS" but reflects "the confusion of life and death that, in Lacan as in Freud, structures psychic life in general" (Hammer 115). Although it does not rely on the Lacanian version of the death drive that Hammer invokes, my discussion of "An Upward Look" comes to a conclusion similar to Hammer's about "Farewell Performance": that it breaks down the boundary between those who are affected by AIDS and those who are not.

26. The two names give two perspectives on the same star; in the context of the poem's concern with eros, we remember that that "star" is the planet Venus.

27. When Merrill reverses the metaphor to figure body as landscape in "The Instilling" (*Poems* 623) and "The Great Emigration" (629–31), he stresses the body's vulnerability to invasion both by illness and by the explorations of medicine.

28. The form of "An Upward Look" might be said to recrystallize an ancient one: the alliterative four-beat line of Anglo-Saxon verse.

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Natural History and Epiphany: Elizabeth Bishop's Darwin Letter

Zachariah Pickard

Writing in his *Autobiography* about the joys of beetle collecting and, particularly, the pleasure of discovering a new species, Charles Darwin makes an interesting comparison:

> No poet ever felt more delighted at seeing his first poem published than I did at seeing, in Stephens' *Illustrations of British Insects,* the magic words, "captured by C. Darwin, Esq." (21)

Here Darwin compares the simplest of his accomplishments—the capture of a new beetle—to the publication of a poem. Taking my cue from this remark, I would like to compare the pattern underpinning Darwin's work to Elizabeth Bishop's characteristic process of epiphany. The idea is originally Bishop's and was first put forward as part of a correspondence between Bishop and Anne Stevenson that took place in the 1960s, while Stevenson was working on what was to be the first full-length study of Bishop's poetry. In a letter of 28 October 1963, Stevenson sent Bishop a working outline of the book, the second chapter of which was to deal with the relationship between Bishop and "the surrealists and the symbolists too," particularly "Klee and Ernst." Stevenson perceived in all three an interest in "hallucinatory and dream material" and a shared belief that "there is no split personality, but rather a sensitivity that extends equally into the subconscious and the conscious world." In her reply Bishop agrees about the lack of a "split" between the conscious and the unconscious but is less enthusiastic about surrealism. Instead, she changes the topic to Darwin:

> Yes, I agree with you. I think that's what I was trying to say in the speech above. There is no "split." Dreams, works of art (some), glimpses of the always-more-successful surrealism of everyday life, unexpected moments of empathy (is it?), catch a peripheral vision of whatever it is one can never really see full-face but that seems enormously important. I can't believe we are wholly irrational—and I do admire Darwin! But reading Darwin, one admires the beautiful and solid case being built up out of his endless heroic observations, almost unconscious or automatic—and then comes a sudden relaxation, a forgetful phrase, and one feels the strangeness of his undertaking, sees the lonely young man, his eyes fixed on facts and minute details, sinking or sliding giddily off into the unknown. What one seems to want in art, in experiencing it, is the same thing that is necessary for its creation, a self-forgetful, perfectly useless concentration. (Letter 8–20 Jan. 1964; hereafter Jan. letter)

There is much to be said about this passage, but what I am interested in here is the somewhat surprising shift from surrealism to Darwin. Though Bishop flirted with surrealism in her youth, she later took pains to distance herself from it: "I [. . .] am not a surrealist" she wrote to her publisher with uncharacteristic firmness in 1946, worried about what might appear on the back of her first collection of poetry (*One Art* 135). And yet, confronted with Stevenson's attempt to link her to Ernst, whom she calls "a dreadful painter" (Jan. letter), Bishop, ever polite, does not correct Stevenson so much as simply change the subject. When Stevenson raises the question of surrealism and the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious, Bishop agrees, and then talks about Darwin.

The link here is Ernst's *Histoire naturelle*, a book that Bishop owned as a young woman, and which she mentions to Stevenson as one of the few of Ernst's works that she "liked" (Jan. letter). In a letter to Hallie Tompkins, written when she first got the book, she describes it as an attempt to "mak[e] fun of Darwin" (qtd. in Millier 89). But though the train of thought that leads Bishop from surrealism to Ernst's *Histoire naturelle* to Darwin is clear, the use to which she then puts Darwin is considerably more complicated. She makes of him an aesthetic role model, painting his "perfectly useless concentration" as what "one seems to want in art, in experiencing it" and also the "thing that is necessary for its creation." Implicitly, Bishop redirects Stevenson from one model of mind to another, suggesting that it is Darwin who shares her ideas about the lack of a "split" between the conscious and the unconscious mind, not the surrealists.[1]

In order to make sense of this strange maneuver, Bishop's comments need to be examined in two related contexts: first the general appeal to science and the figure of the scientist in high-modernist statements of poetics, and second the methods and intellectual models of Victorian natural history that Darwin actually practiced. In what follows, then, I will explore the ways in which poets of the era just before Bishop's use the scientist as a figure for the poet, in order to show how differently Bishop uses Darwin. Darwin, I will argue, is not the sort of scientist that Eliot or Pound has in mind nor the sort of scientist that we know today. By recovering the intellectual methods underlying Darwin's work, I hope to provide a model for reading a number of Bishop's poems, but I will focus on "In the Waiting Room," a poem that not only embodies Bishop's Darwinian approach but actually rewrites large portions of her letter to Stevenson in poetic form.

A disclaimer is needed, though: throughout this article I will be speaking about both modern science and Victorian natural history in a way that a student of science might find somewhat naive. I will assume, for instance, that modern experimentalist science is essentially objective, though the extent to which this is really the case is obviously questionable. Similarly, I will make arguments about the role of random collection in Victorian natural history that will ignore the question of whether a project so closely associated with colonialism can really be considered random. For a philosopher of science these are serious problems, but my subject is poetry, and my scientists are not real, but rather the imaginary figures that poets think of when they think of science. My experimentalists, therefore, will be perfectly impersonal, and my natural historians will remain free from the taint of colonialism, and my reader should remember that I am speaking more about *ideas* of science and natural history than I am about science and natural history themselves.

§

I began by suggesting that Bishop employs Darwin as a sort of substitute for the surrealists, gently redirecting Stevenson's attention away from Ernst and toward someone with whom she felt more in tune. But there is more to the Darwin letter than a rejection of surrealism. Thomas Travisano has suggested that Bishop is, in certain ways, a "postsurrealist" (45), but by using a figure from the previous century as her aesthetic champion, Bishop seems intent on making herself a sort of presurrealist. There is a tone of dismay, of repulsion from modernity in the Darwin letter: she complains of the "ghastly taste," "ugliness," and "bad manners" of other writers and claims that, of her own poems, most of the ones she "can still abide were written before [she] met Robert Lowell" in 1947. There is something elegiac about this attitude, a nostalgia for a more genteel age, as if the surrealists were merely part of a larger problem with modern letters and modern times. Her Darwin is, in this sense, opposed not only to surrealism but to modernity more generally and, as I will argue, to certain aspects of high modernism and its heirs. Her choice of Darwin instead of a more contemporary scientific figure is revealing in that it allows her to sidestep a number of conventional twentieth-century ideas about science.

In her next letter to Stevenson, Bishop writes of finding a reference to Darwin in William Carlos Williams's "Asphodel, that greeny flower," a reference that is "not in [her] sense, at all" (Letter 23 Mar. 1964), and it is crucial to distinguish Bishop's Darwin from Williams's. For Williams, as for many, Darwin "opened our eyes" (323) by destroying ancient dogmata, and it is the clarity of his thought that is so attractive. In this sense, Williams uses Darwin in a familiar, modernist manner, as a model of clear sight and logical thought. But Williams's approach is not Bishop's. Bishop was enthusiastic about Darwin in a very personal way, calling him both "one of the people I like best in the world" (*One Art* 543) and "my favorite hero, almost" (544). These comments suggest a connection to Darwin the man as much as to Darwin the symbol of science. And so where certain of her modernist predecessors sought to include scientific images in their statements of poetics in order to absorb some of the aura of objectivity and precision that the scientist brought, Bishop's use of Darwin is quite different, both more specific and more human.

Insofar as modernism sought an aesthetics of clarity and precision, of stripped-down objectivity, the scientist made an attractive emblem. The "poet and the scientist," Marianne Moore suggests, "work analogously":

> Both are willing to waste effort. To be hard on himself is one of the main strengths of each. Each is attentive to clues, each must narrow the choice, must strive for precision. (30)

The characterization of "the poet" as one who is objective ("hard on himself"), eliminates clutter ("narrow[s] the choice"), and "strive[s] for precision" reveals a number of modernist preoccupations. Ezra Pound similarly recommends "the way of the scientists rather than the way of an advertising agent for a new soap" (*Literary* 6) and labels his ideogrammatic method "THE METHOD OF SCIENCE" (*ABC* 26). Most famously, perhaps, T. S. Eliot unites tenor and vehicle when, in order to show that only through "depersonalization" can art "be said to approach to the condition of science," he likens the mind of the poet to "a bit of finely filiated platinum" (40). Eliot's rhetoric here takes it as given that art *should* approach the condition of science, and his argument about the relationship between tradition and the individual talent is implicitly based on familiar ideas about how scientific work is done. In Pound's words,

> there are simple procedures, and there are known discoveries, clearly marked [. . . and] in each age one or two men of genius find something and express it. (*Literary* 19)

One builds, that is, on the work of one's predecessors, thus contributing to a larger project. According to Pound, the individual talent can contribute by "find[ing]" something; for Eliot it does so by introducing "the new (the really new) work of art" into the field (38). Behind much of the high-modernist rhetoric about the project of poetry lies a set of ideas and notions about the experimentalist sciences.

But as Charles Altieri points out, the modernists are not entirely comfortable with some of the implications of the scientific metaphor:

> However liberating science's version of impersonal dehumanization might prove, [modernist] artists almost always had to restore some aspects of the romantic values they were ostensively denying, as in Eliot's claim that only those who knew what it meant to suffer from personality would appreciate the impersonality he was calling for. (77)

Hence too Pound's recursion to "men of genius." This reluctance to commit fully to impersonality is not an obstacle for everyone, though. Across the channel, André Breton, the founder of surrealism, picks up some of Eliot's terms in his own argument about the extinction of personality, telling his reader that one might as well speak "du talent de ce mètre en platine" (39) ("of this platinum ruler's talent") as of the artist's talent. Whether or not Breton is consciously invoking Eliot as an authority, the two of them fit into a useful narrative of literary depersonalization: modernism publicly endorses a scientific, depersonalized notion of poetry as a project while secretly harboring certain misgivings; feeling none of modernism's doubt, surrealism picks up on the scientific language and declares that its *recherches* will eliminate personality in favor of the unconscious; and, more recently, some postmodern poets have celebrated the eradication of personality for its own sake. Christian Bök, for instance, Canada's postmodern *enfant terrible,* writes enthusiastically that *The Policeman's Beard Is Half Constructed,* a book made up of random phrases generated by a computer program, is "not so much a book of surreal poems as it is an obit for classic poets" that "confounds the very idea of authorship, refuting the privileged uniqueness of poetic genius" by proving that "the involvement of an author in the production of literature has henceforth become discretionary." Where the surrealists and modernists believe in setting the self aside in favor of something greater (the unconscious, precision, tradition), it is the setting aside itself that so pleases Bök.

Bishop is closer to the modernists on this front and closer, particularly, to what Altieri calls "the romantic values they were ostensively denying" (77). She departs from the narrative of impersonality, as her choice of scientist hero makes clear. If the ideas about science that the modernists invoke in their discussion of poetry and art reflect modern, experimentalist scientific practices, Bishop, by choosing a scientist from another era, one who practiced a form of science that had largely ceased to exist, steps away from the dominant discourse of poetry as science and instead invokes Victorian natural history as her model.

Darwin and his colleagues have little in common with the lab-coated figures that Eliot's imagery summons up, and one must leave behind certain ideas about the disinterestedness and impersonality of science and its emphasis on precision and specialization in order to understand what exactly Bishop is invoking when she chooses Darwin as her artistic model. Victorian natural history does not agree well with more contemporary ideas about science on any number of levels: it prefers observation in the field to experimentation in the laboratory; it does "not require any great accuracy in [. . .] measurements" (Darwin, *Autobiography* 100); and it is practiced largely by untrained or half-trained enthusiasts like Darwin himself. Most importantly, though, natural history differs from a more modern notion of science in that it is organized around accumulation rather than reduction. This emphasis on accumulation exists on a number of levels, from the physical work of collecting specimens to the all-encompassing scope of natural history's inquiry.

Even in his own time, Darwin's type of science was falling out of fashion. In the "most thoroughly marked and underlined page" in Bishop's copy of the *Autobiography* (Rognoni 246), Darwin's son Francis points out that his father wrote and worked in a "non-modern spirit and manner" and that he was "a Naturalist in the old sense of the word, that is, a man who works at many branches of science, not merely a specialist in one" (*Autobiography* 106). This model of science was rapidly losing ground, and by the middle of the nineteenth century "natural history had fragmented into separate scientific disciplines and broken into subdisciplines" (Farber 33). Darwin, rather than specializing, published on a wide array of subjects, including among other things coral reefs, mould, barnacles, worms, orchids, insectivorous plants, the expression of emotion, and, of course, species. As a natural historian, Darwin follows Buffon, whose 36-volume *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière* (1749–1804) became "*the* encyclopedia of the natural world" (Farber 20) by providing a "complete natural history of all living beings and minerals" (14). For Buffon and for Darwin, natural history is, quite literally, the history of nature, the study of all physical things over all of time. This model of science is obviously very different from the more specialized one invoked by the modernists and their heirs, and it implies a very different set of values and work habits.

The precision now associated with science is based on ideas of specialization and reduction, and when the modernists use science as a model for poetry, they tend to invoke such ideas. For Moore, the scientist and poet "must narrow the choice," and it is the impulse toward the sleek that drives Pound to prefer "the way of the scientists rather than the way of an advertising agent for a new soap." Moore and Pound are speaking here of different parts of the creative process, but the impulse is similar. Moore focuses on perception, on the work to be done before composition, and compares it to the work of the scientist eliminating possible hypotheses, narrowing the choices in order to find the correct one; Pound is focused on the act of writing itself, the building up of words on the page, and endorses the concision of scientific prose. Moore, in other words, is trimming ideas before sitting down to write; Pound is holding back words that are desperate to fill his page. For both, science is precise in that it reduces; less is more.

Darwin works in the opposite direction, by accretion, as is perhaps inevitable when one's topic is all of the natural world. As James Paradis argues, the phenomena that natural history seeks to explain are "hidden from the senses" because they take place over "magnitudes of space and time that human physiology [is] not equipped to apprehend" (93). As a result, it is only through the slow accumulation of individual "moments of perception" that the natural historian can gain access to the history of nature (94). No single reported fact is of use, but through what Bishop calls the "almost unconscious or automatic" process of observation, a substantial enough body of material develops, and the natural historian can synthesize and extrapolate. In this sense, natural history is a science not only of physical collection—the natural history museum of today has its origin in the curiosity cabinet of the sixteenth century—but of intellectual collection. And these two notions of collection are intricately linked in Darwin, as his *Autobiography* suggests:

> By the time I went to day-school my taste for natural history, and more especially for collecting, was well developed. [. . .] The passion for collecting which leads a man to be a systematic naturalist, a virtuoso, or a miser, was very strong in me. (6)

Collection here is both a more specialized subset of natural history and the underlying habit of mind that "leads a man to be a systematic naturalist." The principle of collection, that is, structures both the work one does and the way one thinks.

The basic intellectual process of natural history moves from collection to synthesis, as the very first page of *On the Origin of Species* suggests:

> it occurred to me, in 1837, that something might perhaps be made out on this question [of species] by patiently accumulating and reflecting on all sorts of facts which could possibly have any bearing on it. (95)

Where the concrete work of natural history is a process of what Bishop calls "heroic observations," the eventual intellectual work is a process of immense synthesis. Darwin characterized his own mind as "a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts" (*Autobiography* 54), and it is crucial to his method that *all* of the facts—"all sorts of facts which could possibly have any bearing"—be incorporated. This basic method of accumulation and synthesis preserves a certain mystery that more modern notions of science can lack. Moore's gradual elimination of hypotheses is a sure and steady process, which has no moment of—for lack of a better word—inspiration. Eliot, by likening the creative process to a chemical reaction, implies that the creation of art is methodical, even inevitable, so long as one has the appropriate materials. But in Darwin's method there is an unexpected moment given to the scientist, a sudden shift, what Bishop calls a "sinking or sliding giddily off into the unknown." As plodding as the process of collection may seem, it builds toward a moment of vision at which an internal, abstract world emerges.

As James Paradis argues, there is something counterintuitively romantic about this process. Though natural history does not privilege the individual moment of perception in quite the way that romanticism does, it does rely on a process of imaginative synthesis. Darwin's vision is not "the result of an immediate act of perception in physical nature"—not, that is, an imaginative reaction to the visual presence of the real world—but rather an "aesthetic response to a mental landscape founded upon generalization" (Paradis 87). The slow accumulation of observations functions like the piecing together of a mental jigsaw puzzle. In an analogy that calls to mind a preoccupation of Bishop's, Paradis likens the process to cartography, which also translates individual moments of perception into an abstract picture of reality. Beginning with individual observations, with measurements taken, cartography moves outward to position "natural entities in relation to one another and not in relation to the observer" (101). Similarly, natural history depends on the leap from the concrete seen to the abstract imagined, and is "no less the product of the imagination" than the work of the romantic poet (94). The goal of natural history is to move "beyond moments of perception to the continental scope of land formations and species distribution, to the temporal dimension of the prehistoric past." The natural historian needs to move between "a concrete landscape, full of distinct, palpable organic forms, and an abstract physical scheme," to be "alternately at the center of the whole and at its distant periphery" (101).

Paradis's account of the intersection of "the aesthetic idealism of Romantic art" and the "traditions of the geological and natural sciences" (85) helps to explain the attraction Bishop felt for Darwin. The jump from a patient accumulation of detail to an imaginative realization of something larger and more abstract is not only what she describes in her letter to Stevenson but also the pattern that underlies a number of her poems.

"The Fish" is the clearest example of this pattern, moving as it does from careful and patient description to epiphany without ever quite making explicit what exactly tips the balance. But other poems—"Over 2,000 Illustrations and a Complete Concordance," "At the Fishhouses," "Questions of Travel," "The Armadillo"—evince the same internal structure.

All of these poems, though, were written before the Darwin letter, and while they share the structure that the letter describes, they do not really come out of it. "In the Waiting Room" (*Poems* 159–61), however, was finished no later than August 1967, when Bishop sent a draft to Robert Lowell (Millier 444), which puts its date of composition around or slightly after her letter to Stevenson. The poem takes up an episode that Bishop had already treated in prose, in "The Country Mouse," a work written in 1961 but published only posthumously. It is impossible to know if Bishop made a conscious decision not to publish the prose version of the episode, but read together with the Darwin letter, the poem seems to supersede and prose piece in such a way as to render it superfluous. Perhaps, having either temporarily or permanently set aside "The Country Mouse," Bishop found herself articulating to Stevenson a set of ideas about poetry and the conscious and unconscious mind and relating them all to Darwin and the methods of natural history. Having thus clarified the issues in her own mind, she was moved to rewrite the waiting-room episode as "In the Waiting Room." This narrative is, of course, conjecture, but it helps to frame a number of crucial differences between the two versions of the episode and a number of similarities between the Darwin letter and the poem.

In "The Country Mouse," the waiting-room episode comes at the very end of a long series of memories, all centered around the experience of being taken at the age of six from rural Nova Scotia to Worcester, Massachusetts. The details of the episode are mostly the same as they are in the poem, but with a few key differences: the *National Geographic* plays a much smaller role—she only looks at the cover—and there is no *"oh!* of pain" to trigger her epiphany (*Poems* 160). Instead, the feeling comes of itself, quite suddenly:

> I looked at the magazine cover—I could read most of the words—shiny, glazed, yellow and white. The black letters said: FEBRUARY 1918. A feeling of absolute and utter desolation came over me. (*Prose* 32–33)

This "awful sensation" is "like coasting downhill [. . .] only much worse, and it quickly smashed into a tree" (33). The unpleasantness of this sensation is a significant difference between the story and the poem. "The Country Mouse" is a long story about a child's unhappiness, and in that context this particular episode functions as a sort of summation of all the many unpleasant and unsettling things that take place over the course of the story; the episode consists essentially of the grim realization that "you are going to be *you* forever." "In the Waiting Room," on the other hand, comprises a discrete experience and functions as an ontological epiphany rather than an existential crisis, a visionary shift based on the one she ascribes to Darwin.

The speaker of the poem "carefully / studie[s]" the contents of the *National Geographic* (159), and the things she sees in it—volcanoes, cannibals, "Babies with pointed heads"—take the place of the accumulated events of "The Country Mouse." By replacing the many miseries of an individual with the collected observations of natural history (of which *National Geographic* is devoted to a popularized form) Bishop lays a foundation for a larger leap. The stakes are raised; the poem is not autobiography but epiphany, and her hero is no longer a mouse but a figure based on Darwin. Like "the lonely young" Darwin making "observations," the solitary six-year-old begins by observing "arctics and overcoats, / lamps and magazines" (*Poems* 159). Just as a "forgetful phrase" sends Darwin "sinking or sliding giddily off into the unknown," an "oh! of pain" sends her "falling off / the round, turning world," with the waiting room "sliding / beneath a big black wave" (161). As Darwin slides with "his eyes fixed on facts and minute details," she falls with her "eyes glued to the cover / of the *National Geographic*" (160). And just as Darwin's slip reveals "the strangeness of his undertaking," the speaker knows "that nothing stranger" than this epiphany "had ever happened" or "could ever happen."

Beyond these resemblances, there are also similarities in intellectual structure between the poem and Bishop's understanding of Darwin. The poem dramatizes an abrupt recognition of what one is to oneself—"you are an *I*"—and an equally abrupt understanding of how one is thought of by others—"you are an *Elizabeth*"—and in doing so it conflates the first, second, and third person. But it moves even further, into the third-person plural, declaring that "you are one of *them*," and it is here that the abstraction of the natural historian truly begins. The speaker glides from her own point of view to the view of those who know her name and on to a fully abstracted, classified view of herself as simply one of *"them."* The effect is of a movie camera pulling back from a closeup to a long shot and on to a view of all humanity—she has fallen off the world and can see it whole. In a very few moments, the speaker recognizes herself both subjectively and objectively; she is, in Paradis's terms, both "at the center of the whole and at its distant periphery." And like Darwin, from that distance what interests her is the question of species, the "similarities" that "held us all together / or made us all just one?" (161). She makes a few half-hearted suggestions—"boots, hands, the family voice"—but leaves the question essentially open. It is, after all, the "unknown" into which she is sliding; Bishop's interest is not in the Darwin who solves the question of species but in the Darwin who first imagines it, who catches "a peripheral vision of whatever it is one can never really see full-face but that seems enormously important."

The poem is both more condensed and more expansive than the prose piece, taking only a single episode, but making of it an epiphany of a much larger sort. Where "The Country Mouse" describes the feeling as "coasting downhill," the poem works on a larger scale, turning the hill into the entire world. Like a natural historian, the speaker builds toward a theory of everything from a set of minute observations, depicting the visionary moment that comes from a "a self-forgetful, perfectly useless concentration" on the things of the world. And this is, in the end, what the Darwin letter is about: the relationship between the process of empirical observation and the gift of vision or epiphany. Crucial to Bishop's aesthetic is a unique combination of perseverance and mystery: perseverance of observation that leads mysteriously to epiphany.

This aesthetic is modeled after the natural historian and, by an odd twist, after nature itself as it is presented in Darwin's writings. The process of natural history is based on a notion of almost blind accumulation, and part of what makes Darwin as significant as he is is the way he extends this aspect of his method into his theory, "successfully eliminat[ing] teleology from the pool of common metaphysical ideas" (Carroll 30). He does so by using the nonteleological methodology of natural history as a blueprint for his theory of natural selection. Overtly, Darwin derives his theory from the example of animal husbandry: as the farmer selects breeding stock, nature selects successful variants. But this analogy implies purpose in nature as in a farmer. The real analogy behind natural selection is the work of the natural historian.

Darwin's topic—the origin of species—is that moment when, as a product of countless random variations over countless generations, a new species can be said to come into being. A great deal of what Darwin is arguing against is the position of natural theology—that all species were created at one time and that species is a fact, not an idea. In this sense his work is about the origin of species in the abstract singular as well as the origin of species in the concrete plural, and his work shows that the idea of species is essentially an enabling fiction: "No one definition [of species] has as yet satisfied all naturalists; yet every naturalist knows vaguely what he means when he speaks of a species" (*Origin* 122). Species is merely the point at which enough random empirical fact (variation) has accumulated to give birth to a new abstraction (species). Random variation is as "perfectly useless" as the concentration of the natural historian, and yet it still leads to the abstraction of species, just as what Paradis calls the natural historian's "moments of perception" (94) lead to "an abstract physical scheme" (101).

And this process continues up the chain of taxonomical being:

> Thus the small differences distinguishing varieties of the same species, steadily tend to increase till they come to equal the greater differences between species of the same genus, or even of distinct genera. (Darwin, *Origin* 175)

At the end of his chapter on natural selection, Darwin likens the natural world to a tree, the individual twigs of which represent variations, the larger twigs species, the branches genera, and so on. The "great branches" that stand for the classes and orders of the natural world "were themselves, once, when the tree was small, budding twigs" (176). In drawing this analogy Darwin goes beyond denying the simultaneous creation of all species and calls into question the idea of classification as a whole. Species, genus, family, order—all become little more than arbitrary stops on a continuum that begins with random variation of the smallest kind. In this way the origin of species (or genus or family or order) is an oddly satisfying metaphor for what Bishop is trying to say about the conscious and the unconscious. Variation is to species as observation is to abstraction as conscious is to unconscious. There is no split. Rather, there is a continuous spectrum, and there is the moment when a buildup at one end of the spectrum brings about a click at the other end, when accumulated observations trigger, in some mysterious way, a giddy epiphany. To read the world through Bishop's letter, the origin of species is in that moment when nature, her eyes fixed on minute details, sinks or slides "giddily off into the unknown."

Like Darwin, Bishop treasures a working interrelation of the conscious and the unconscious mind, a division of intellectual labor. Their work is done, according to Bishop, in sequence: the conscious mind begins with a "perfectly useless concentration" on "facts and minute details," and the unconscious mind follows behind with that "sudden relaxation," the feeling of "sinking or sliding giddily off into the unknown." Crucially, Bishop seeks to replicate this process in her reader, insisting that "What one seems to want in art, in experiencing it, is the same things that is necessary for its creation." Implicit in the Darwin letter, then, is both a statement of what she seeks in her own poetry and a guide for her reader. Her goal is to craft a set of particulars engrossing enough to draw the reader further and further into the poem so that, once entranced, the reader can be pushed out, half-conscious, into the unknown. She asks the reader simply to read with Darwin's rapt attention, to achieve a "self-forgetful [. . .] concentration." Ideally, by the poem's end, such careful scrutiny will have transcended itself, and like the speaker of "Over 2,000 Illustrations and a Complete Concordance," we will have "looked and looked our infant sight away" (*Poems* 59).

Notes

1. For a full discussion of Bishop's rejection of surrealism, see my article "The Attack on Surrealism."

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Modernism and Disciplinary History: On H. G. Wells and T. S. Eliot

Lisa Fluet

> Gutman stopped whispering. His sleek dark eyes examined Spade's face, which was placid. The fat man asked: "Well, sir, what do you think of that?"
>
> "I don't know."
>
> The fat man smiled complacently. "These are facts, historical facts, not schoolbook history, not Mr. Wells's history, but history nevertheless."
>
> —Dashiell Hammett (124)

"Mr. Wells's history" serves as a casual point of reference in Caspar Gutman's account of the appearance and subsequent disappearance of the Maltese falcon from recorded history. As he explains to Sam Spade, the Knights of Rhodes ordered the making of a tribute to Emperor Charles V that reflected and celebrated their unabashed looting of the East: a "glorious golden falcon" assembled by Turkish slaves, "encrusted from head to foot with the finest jewels in their coffers . . . the finest out of Asia" (124). But it never reached the emperor because it was stolen—and had been stolen repeatedly ever since. As the most academically invested twentieth-century seeker of the falcon, Gutman's complacent avarice makes him the modern historical authority of the moment, since historical facts are as steeped in contented criminality as he is. As both thief and historian, he brushes received, "schoolbook" history against the grain to expose forgotten thefts. Sam Spade's placid, noncommittal response to the relish with which Gutman narrates the falcon's bloody travels suggests a present gone blandly indifferent to the exotic, high-stakes backdrop of crusades, conquest, slavery, greed, and international piracy.

In this context, Mr. Wells's history—that is, *The Outline of History*—appears naively distanced from historical facts, a vague "outline" removed from the insistent materiality of the falcon's travels through time.[1] If Sam Spade's outward refusal to be moved by past violence stems from his hard-boiled sense that modernity is characterized by everyday bloodshed, Wells's *Outline* stands for a kind of soft-boiled modernity. Simply unaware of either past, exotic brutalities or present, routine ones—lacking both Gutman's and Sam Spade's insights—*The Outline,* like many of Wells's interwar works, adheres to a belief in universal humanity's enlightened progress toward a secular world government, a condition that would render obsolete the crusading past that interests Gutman. And yet "history nevertheless" possesses a complicated allure for Sam Spade as well as Gutman. A kind of cultural knowingness attaches to the historical facts that Gutman conveys to Spade, a sense that "we men of the world know" how greed and bloodshed really propel history, not the sanitized, bloodless innocence of Edwardian popular historians. The desire that both men share to hold the falcon implies a desire to hold the material of history in one's hands, to touch the barbarically authentic in what Walter Benjamin might recognize as this "tainted . . . cultural treasure" (256).

Of course, Hammett will counter Gutman's narrative with the subsequent discovery that the falcon is a fake. Gutman's "rara avis" (204) is both a copy and a rarity: not the real thing, but evidence of a rarely expressed desire for the kind of brutal crusading efficiency that the novel's hard-boiled present can only weakly imitate. For all the weight of this falcon, holding it implies holding nothing at all—"the stuff that dreams are made of," in John Huston's fortunate, if un-Hammett-like, addition to his film. In Gutman's depiction, the authentic falcon's origins are implicated in highly effective barbarism: the systematic looting of the East coupled with efficient exploitation of "the anonymous toil" (Benjamin 256) of enslaved workers. In contrast, the clumsier efforts to obtain the falcon by both Spade and Gutman's gang come to be implicated in a wistful "dream" to reproduce the success of such extortion. In *The Maltese Falcon,* gangster ineptitude and haphazard, wasteful violence are only feeble contemporary echoes of an older, more exacting order of barbarity, as when Sam Spade awkwardly steps on the hand of the dead man who has just "toiled" to deliver the fake falcon to him, while his own "widespread fingers" exhibit "ownership in their curving" over it (159). Efficiency and bloodshed forge crusade-era "historical facts," while the hard-boiled detective story form itself, in its well-advertised graphic violence, chronicles bloodshed that goes nowhere and yields nothing. And yet this contrast also articulates a nostalgia for crusades that went somewhere and took something—that did much more than clumsily step on the fingers of someone who is already dead. Hammett's presentation of Gutman and Wells as competing historians thus privileges the modernist pulp novel's masculine closeness to the sordid, senseless immediacy of urban violence; chronicling this hard-boiled present takes precedence over both Gutman's efficiently bloody past and Wells's efficiently bloodless future.

Gutman's comparison allows me to arrange the relationship between Wells's history and hard-boiled historical awareness in terms of a rather well-documented opposition between Edwardian progressive naiveté and high modern ironic knowingness. Wells's history suffers from the detachment of its "outline" format; his world-state goals, tied to the attempted universal reach of his history, assume a respectful but inevitably distant perspective, far from the exotic barbarity that Gutman relishes and farther still from the immediate, sordid barbarity that Sam Spade half-heartedly moves about in. At the same time, men like Gutman and Spade recognize the irony in pursuing the falcon, even though the pursuit routinely manifests its own futility; smart historians know that the search is everything and the ostensible goal too perfect, fundamentally unattainable. To naive, utopically minded internationalists like Wells, the distant, equally impossible goal of peaceful world government is everything—and *The Outline of History,* along with his numerous other published global visions, merely a means to such an end.

In what follows, I want to complicate this easy critical dichotomy, since it has long occupied a central and in many ways uncontested position in how we construct our disciplinary histories of the formal and intellectual aspirations of modernist writers against other writers like Wells. In other words, literary criticism after literary modernism, and in the wake of the Frankfurt School, has tended to side with the perspectives of Gutman, Sam Spade, and Hammett in constructing its own disciplinary histories. To stabilize our position as critics "in the know" where "history nevertheless" is concerned, we recognize Gutman's connection between cultural treasures and victorious extortion. Like Sam Spade, we further sense the wrongness of Gutman's gleeful identification with past extortion, since haphazard violence is all too wearyingly familiar in modernity. Ultimately, however, as professional critics approaching the hard-boiled novel, we recognize the genre's dialectical positioning of Sam Spade's professionalism against a necessarily bleak, hard-boiled terrain for his expertise. Not only will continuing as a detective require that he choose not to satisfy his desire for the femme fatale, but also the real object of his profession becomes preserving a nostalgic sense of decline from desire-driven historical actions into modern, affectless professional decisions.

This sense of a decline into professionalism informs literary criticism as well. Modern criticism's professional ethic, for F. R. Leavis and T. S. Eliot, relies on the perceived necessity of preserving *"some* tradition"—any tradition that would "set its elite salvagers apart from their benighted, traditionless contemporaries" (Robbins, *Secular Vocations* 18). Gutman and Spade, as "elite salvagers" of the tradition of Maltese falcon possessors, also call attention to the "benighted" hard-boiled present—and Sam Spade's professionalism chronicles that disparity in ways that tie pulp fiction closely to literary modernism. But the particular critical commonplace that Robbins identifies, one that we can find echoed in pulp modernism, also relies on the negation of the possibility that Wells, as a historian and intellectual, invites: professional responsibility *without* a decline narrative, that defines itself without a need to preserve the remnants of unrecoverable losses, and that attempts instead to bind forward-looking, utopian globalism with modern intellectual life. Accounts of high modern professionalism, in the examples afforded by the institutionalization of literary criticism and the vocational devotion of the high modern author, tend to present artistic value and its expert cultural preservation as the primary means of salvaging a lost, more coherent past. Wells's version of modern intellectual professionalism refuses to see specialization as a compensation for what has already been irretrievably lost, because he lacks the requisite sense of loss in the first place. He also refuses to acknowledge the centrality of specialized expertise to professional life, but in doing so, he invites speculation on the possibility of other centers to professional life. If we consider academic life as primarily concerned with wedding expertise to educational responsibility at the state level—as in Robbins's suggestion that academics adopt "some version of the slogan 'from the people who brought you the social welfare state'" ("Village" 21)—Wells's further modification might extend the slogan to a kind of social welfare world. This is a very specific global vision: Wells essentially wants the whole world to look like what his own, scholarship boy's world offered him—the right of access, via education, to an understanding of global citizenship. In taking up the idea of global education, then, Wells embraces interdisciplinarity in *The Outline of History* in a way that appeared to his critics simply as an amateurish attempt to co-opt the authority that belonged to individual disciplines. This critique, however, and the subsequent ones that *The Outline* inspired in T. S. Eliot, suggest more than a simple oppositional story between Edwardians and high moderns. Brushing modernism against the grain, they prefigure contemporary debates on the relation of public intellectuals, cultural studies, the welfare state, and globalism to the disciplinary history of professional literary critical study.

§

For all their hard- and soft-boiled differences, Dashiell Hammett and H. G. Wells do share a crucial, underexamined creative interest in the novelistic depiction of world-weary, underpaid men who represent both emergent forms of lower-level white collar work and the professional face of state power. In "The Contemporary Novel," a 1911 lecture to the Times Book Club, Wells offers one approach to understanding the responsibilities of the novel as a "social mediator" addressed to the challenges posed by "the increasing complexity of our state":

> On every hand we are creating officials, and compared with only a few years ago the private life in a dozen fresh directions comes into contact with officialdom. But we still do practically nothing to work out the interesting challenges that occur in this sort of man and that, when you withdraw him as it were from the common crowd of humanity, put his mind if not his body into uniform and endow him with powers and functions and rules. (149)

Wells's contemporary novel, it seems, owes something to the unlovely, often unsympathetic figure of the bureaucratic functionary—that is, to an individual not unlike Sam Spade, endowed with professional responsibilities for facilitating the relationship between private citizen and the powers, functions, and compensations of the state. Wells identifies "the distinctive value of the novel among written works of art" in terms of "characterization"—and most hard-boiled novelists would probably agree with him.

For Wells, however, the British novel so far has only come up with Mr. Bumble as the "supreme and devastating study" of all that is wrong with the low-level functionary as character:

> That one figure lit up and still lights the whole problem of Poor Law administration for the English reading community. It was a translation of well-meant regulations and pseudo-scientific conceptions of social order into blundering, arrogant, ill-bred flesh and blood. . . . You may make your regulations as you please, said Dickens in effect; this is one sample of the stuff that will carry them out. (150)

While we should question Wells's critical estimation of Dickens's contribution to our understanding of the bureaucratic character solely in terms of Mr. Bumble, he nevertheless articulates rather strange goals for the modern novel here. That modern novelists should devote at least some of their characterizing energies to producing better-rounded Mr. Bumbles—thereby "creating an intelligent controlling criticism of officials, and . . . assisting conscientious officials to an effective self-examination" (150)—seems an overly specialized goal, on a par with the obtuse understanding of specialized function associated with Bumbledom.

And yet "the great problem of officialism made flesh" (151) becomes, for Wells, a problem not only of characterization but also one of novelistic form. In this essay the arguments for more humane, sympathetic depictions of low-level bureaucrats as characters frequently slide into arguments for transforming the contemporary novel into the ideal, most socially sympathetic realization of bureaucratic function. If Mr. Bumble and his kind frequently fail in the role of "social mediator" between state and citizen, the novel should step in and, by rendering more nuanced depictions of governmentality, explore the form's capacity to educate readers in feelings unavailable to them in their real-life encounters with "officialdom":

> We must have not only the fullest treatment of the temptations, vanities, abuses, and absurdities of office, but all its dreams, its sense of constructive order, its consolations, its sense of service, and its nobler satisfactions . . . the complicated social organization today cannot get along without the amount of mutual understanding and mutual explanation such a range of characterization in our novels implies. (151)

How we learn to consider governmentality's nobler intentions toward order, service, and consolation, even in the midst of its inevitable falling short of those intentions, thereby occupies a pivotal place in our novelistic education to forms of feeling necessitated by the heightened complexity of modern social organization. Foucault's understanding of government's scrutiny over the "imbrication of men with things" (93) poses a more suspicious version of the dynamic that Wells lays out here. If constant, long-term scrutiny of the involvement of individuals with contingent "things" like wealth, resources, customs, habits, ways of thinking, accidents, and misfortunes impels government intervention into private lives, as Foucault suggests, the "imbrication of men with things" and the uncertain outcomes of that imbrication can also suggest a way of conceiving the representative concerns of novelistic form.

It is possible to see a contrast between Foucault's knowing, late twentieth-century suspicions of these tendencies in modernity and Wells's naive, Edwardian enthusiasms for them. However, I also want to suggest, echoing others, that the monolithic account of modern state power with which Foucault is often, if not always correctly, associated, tends to occlude consideration of the socially mediating position of the welfare state. If we tend to pair Foucault's account of modern liberal discipline with the nineteenth-century novel, we could also, as Wells suggests here, try to pair the welfare state and its mediating effects with the modern novel. Even *The Maltese Falcon,* which depicts state power as a frightening force determined to convict and punish the femme fatale, still presents us with a somewhat compassionate state functionary in Sam Spade, suggesting that the hard-boiled, modern detective novel does possess an instinct for representing state intervention in ways that Wells would appreciate. That Wells's 1911 speech on the contemporary novel tends to be anthologized along with the many letters, essays, polemics, and apologies that emerged from his confrontation with Henry James indicates how unwilling twentieth-century literary criticism has been to endorse his objectives for the novel, preferring James's version of novelistic professionalism as a way, at least in part, of isolating the novel as a worthy object for professional literary critical study. However, taking my cue from Raymond Williams, one of Wells's more circumspect admirers from the left, I want to suggest that this is really too simple a story that we tell ourselves, of a master/disciple (James/Wells) confrontation culminating in the dismissal of the wayward, rude Edwardian and the institutional legitimization of an intensely focused, polite James. I think we should retell this story as a period-defining conflict between the utopian aspects of welfare state professionalism and high modern professionalism—that is, between an understanding of specialized, expert roles in modern life as intimately tied to service, education, compensation, and governmental mediation and an understanding of professional life as compensation for a contemporary, fragmented sense of alienation from a more coherent past, via the expert preservation of a literary cultural tradition within which the novel is an important part.

If Wells's understanding of the state in "The Contemporary Novel" sounds rather vague, this could reflect the fact that the anticipations of the welfare state with which Wells's utopian writings (such as *A Modern Utopia, The Shape of Things to Come,* and *The New Machiavelli*) have been associated do not necessarily have England's territorial borders in mind. In *The Rise of Professional Society,* Harold Perkin emphasizes the ways in which Wells's utopias anticipate post–World War II government in England, but he does so partly in order to connect Wells with visions of the welfare state emerging from Fabianism (a movement that Wells later repudiated) and partly to narrate a story of the welfare state's rise as concurrent with the solidification of professional qualifying associations in nineteenth-century Britain and its fall with the onset of Thatcherism in the late twentieth century. His account therefore implicates Wells in a uniquely British story about the beneficial aspects of professionalized society and governmentality. But Wells's conception of the welfare state's domain was primarily a global one, posing the more difficult project of a social welfare world run by global bureaucrats.[2]

The strong impulse toward autobiographical revelation in Wells, most obvious in his 1934 work *Experiment in Autobiography* and more generally in the "transparent" reappearances of his own story in many of his novels and other writings, suggests that—in addition to setting himself the task of characterizing "rounded" global bureaucrats less prone to Bumbledom in his utopias—Wells delegated to autobiography the task of imagining a citizen "character" to whom the peaceful, humane, governmental compensations of a world state could be addressed: the Oliver Twist, in a sense, who might actually benefit from "mediated" Bumbledom. For all his well-intentioned plans for beneficent, peaceful government over global masses, Wells exhibits a frequently noted ambivalence toward the actual presence of anonymous mass humanity in his utopian and dystopian science fiction. He seems unaware of the irony in, for example, actively campaigning for what became, after his death, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights while he indulges in fictional representations of vast human rights abuses, of masses displaced and left to die or vanquished by authoritarian avatars of technological rationalism, as in *A Modern Utopia* and *The War of the Worlds.* The only recipient of the beneficial aspects of global governmentality that Wells is capable of imagining is a world citizen and avid social philosopher who looks very much like himself. The right to articulate his autobiography as a kind of bildungsroman of progress from obscure origins to international fame thus shares in what Franco Moretti has termed the bildungsroman's generic capacity to make us aware of its protagonists as "people endowed with rights" (205).[3] The early twentieth-century Wellsian bildungsroman (*Tono-Bungay*, *Kipps*, the novelistic *Experiment in Autobiography*) thus can be viewed as the generic complement to the hard-boiled forms I discussed earlier: Hammett's characterization of a modern state functionary involved in professional dealings with the aftereffects of human rights abuses (that is, murders) balances against Wells's education novels and the implicit rights of his central protagonists.

For the petit-bourgeois protagonist—George Ponderevo, Kipps, Mr. Lewisham, the young Wells of *Experiment in Autobiography*—this generic relation to the reinforcement of human rights is transformed into what Raymond Williams terms "the endlessly self-conscious, self-consciously perky, the almost apologetic assertion—over the shoulder, behind the hand—of a right to live" (128). If the bildungsroman enforces our belief in Tom Jones's, Waverley's, and Jane Eyre's "right to have rights" by restoring those rights to them in the end as "an act of justice" (Moretti 205), they need not be self-conscious or apologetic about claiming and asserting those rights. Why should they be, since the form makes clear that they are only getting back what was unjustly taken away from them for much of the novel's action. But as Williams suggests, the "irrepressible humour and energy" that easily slides into "cheerful bounce" (128–29) in the tone of Wells's novels stems from a defining, self-conscious uncertainty about the "assertion" of "a right to live." Not about the validity of that right itself, necessarily, but about the right to call attention to it through novelistic assertion in the process of narrating the education of characters like Mr. Lewisham and Kipps. More unapologetic assertions tend to require that the life stories involved be compelling in their Oliver Twist-like, dramatically violent early injustices, in the satisfying contrast between the drastically poor place where the protagonist begins and the better place where he or she ends up. But as Carolyn Steedman has pointed out, the difficulty peculiar to lower-middle-class autobiography, in its stories of education and upward mobility, stems from its own persistent conviction of the "ordinariness" of such stories: "they simply are not bad enough to be worthy of attention" (9). "The very devices that are intended to give expression to childhoods like mine and my mother's [and like Wells's] actually deny their expression" (9). Autobiography, which both Steedman and Wells utilize to create a narrative for education and upward mobility, brings out in each of their cases a primary dissatisfaction with the genre's limits on what *working* and *class* can mean. That is, if you were poor but not *that* poor; if your parents worked but they were servants or manicurists or jacks-of-all-trades, or one of them was frequently missing; and if occasionally you and they were enviously dissatisfied with life's material conditions but refused, for whatever reasons, to seek political consolation in the cultures of working-class consciousness—then, as Steedman makes clear, you may find that "the tradition of cultural criticism" (10) has refused you a generic means of asserting the "psychic individuality" (12) of the particular social, material, and cultural "distress" that you find yourself in. The "over the shoulder, behind the hand" assertion of a "right to live" derives that chronic self-consciousness from the lack of legitimacy that a readily available generic form for such assertions would confer. The right may be yours, in other words, but only if you apologize first for calling attention to it, for presuming that the narrative involved in such an assertion is anything other than "ordinary."

Wells's desirable world would, in a sense, require more sympathetic (and more sympathetically portrayed) bureaucrats who could, in turn, better address their attention and services to "ordinary" Oliver Twists rather than contributing to Oliver's early, "extraordinary" misery, which gets rapt readerly attention as a compensation for poor, misapplied governmental attention. But these reasonable goals, and the "mutual understanding and mutual explanation" that presumably would go into their achievement, offer a significant contrast to the strange privacy of Wells's imagined world-states—where, as in *War of the Worlds,* the philosopher can become best attuned to a cosmopolitan sense of world citizenship and its responsibilities when his world seems almost completely emptied of fellow world citizens whom he might help or who might intervene and help him. For Wells's *Experiment in Autobiography,* maturity into a global sense of citizenship can share the same narrative elements as an upward mobility story, one that Wells would tell movingly in a number of different forms, of the petit-bourgeois scholarship boy rising from obscurity to international celebrity. The complicated, persistent solitude of the petit bourgeoisie, habitually depicted as the group whose members disavow their membership, finds a realization both in Wells's lonely, globally minded philosophers and in the scholarship boy turned international public intellectual of the *Autobiography.* Imagining an audience bigger than himself for his global plans thus frequently daunts Wells, and we find his abiding suspicion of mass, global humanity in many of his works. And yet the ways in which petit-bourgeois identity flies in the face of how we might normally imagine communities of people in class theory suggest affinities with how globality challenges our traditional understanding of more local, experientially defined, and identity-bound human relationships.

Wells's interwar move away from the novel to popular intellectual works like *The Outline of History* therefore can also be viewed as a move away from the novel as the form best suited to represent rounded bureaucratic functionaries and the rights of young global citizens like himself. *The Outline of History,* as Caspar Gutman suggests, really moves history beyond compelling representations of intriguing historical facts tout court; the blandness of the work stems from Wells's pointed interest in repudiating his earlier novelistic interests and embracing a remarkably undialectical vision of progressive Enlightenment. *The Outline* thus works less effectively as a history and seems seriously belated—first published, as it was, in the midst of literary modernism. However, it does position Wells, in his newfound role as public intellectual, as a kind of global bureaucrat—a social mediator between the impossibly vast terrain of unknowable "historical facts" and the utopian, world-state future that he hoped to build through collective, democratic awareness of what he believed everyone should know about. While his selection of "historical facts" essential to an awareness of global history should raise critical eyebrows, his impulse to address the world beyond the confines of disciplinarity shares, with contemporary cultural studies, a desire to flout the legacies of modernism within intellectual life.

§

> What, after reading the book, is one's main sensation? Perhaps that it wasn't so much a book as a lecture, delivered by a vigorous, fair-minded and well-informed free lance. He was assisted by a lantern—its assistance was essential—and bright and clear upon the sheet he projected the misty beginnings of fact. The rocks bubbled and the sea smoked. Presently there was an inter-tidal scum: it was life, trying to move out of the warm water, and subsequent slides showed the various forms it took. A movement also became perceptible among the audience; one or two of the prehistoric experts, discontented at so much lucidity, withdrew.
>
> —E. M. Forster (689)

Forster's early reviews of the first, two-volume edition of *The Outline of History* stand out among contemporary reviews for their positive, unusually charmed sense of the work's effects on readers. It is as though *The Outline* were an entertaining lecture rather than a book, as though the lecturer projected for his audience a comprehensible, bright, and clear vision of the misty beginnings of fact, of the common origins of life emerging from "inter-tidal scum." The only dissatisfaction among audience members can be traced to those representing disciplinary knowledge, who might rebel against the reduction of the focus of their life's work to mere educational entertainment—that is, the "prehistoric experts," those who remain unconvinced precisely because of the lecturer's ability to render lucid what they rely on for its dependable, enduring opacity.

Or so we should believe, from Forster's account. This review allows us to see in miniature an early indication of the large-scale effects that *The Outline*'s wide appeal and numerous successful reprintings would have. Many readers would be charmed; only the experts, those representatives of discrete disciplinary knowledges, would be wary of a charismatic slide show claiming to represent the culmination of years of specialized research into prehistoric life. In retrospect, the suspicions of professional historians hardly appear surprising. How could experts help but criticize a work with such instantaneous mass appeal, soon "found in almost every English-speaking home (often the only historical work)" (Barker 319), particularly when its author openly admitted to heavy reliance on the *Encyclopedia Britannica* for his research? The "Book of Necessary Knowledge," as Wells often dubbed *The Outline,* reflected its author's consuming interest in "the possibility of giving Mr. Everyman an account not merely of past events, but of the main facts about the processes of life in general and the social, economic and political state of the world" (*Experiment* 616). What appeared—already problematically for historical specialists—as an amateur universal history in reality attempted much greater things. Wells sought to compile nothing short of an intellectual guide for everyday life in the modern world as a compensation for the modern Everyman's implicit alienation from a shared, collective awareness of biological, social, economic, and political knowledge.

In the instances when *The Outline* ceases to be merely an amateur history and takes on, for Wells, the character of a general public education, we find Wells taking on the roles of popular intellectual and cultural critic that modernist contemporaries like T. S. Eliot would find so ill-suited to him and to the modern public that Eliot hoped to edify. Later critiques of *The Outline* as history, primarily emerging from historical disciplines, justifiably emphasize its inaccuracy in attempting to demonstrate how "all recorded history had been moving fumblingly forward toward a planned world-state" (Taylor 83) or highlight Wells's "cashing-in" (Novick 193) on the popularity of amateur scholarly works in the interwar period. While these critiques are clearly borne out both by the tone and organization of *The Outline* and by its enormous sales, I want to call attention to Wells's self-appointed status as a conspicuously interdisciplinary intellectual—a modern man of letters impelled by synthesis rather than specialization—in his narrativizing competing histories between nations, ethnicities, and ideologies as one coherent, shared world story. Whatever rightful post-modern suspicions we may have about totalizing world histories, when we consider Wells's overarching motives behind *The Outline,* we find an impulse toward "world education" (*Experiment* 611) heavily invested in alleviating the alienating, atomic effects of heightened disciplinarity for the modern Everyman and in situating the man of letters at the center of that alleviation.

Wells delineates for his readers the organizing motivation behind *The Outline* most succinctly in his first defense of it: "History for Everybody: A Postscript to *The Outline of History,*" a response to criticisms that the first publication of *The Outline* had evoked from scholars in historical, classical, and religious fields. In "History for Everybody" Wells asserts that he conceived of *The Outline* as "a framework, which people might have in common, and into which everyone might fit his own particular reading and historical interests" (887). This single historical narrative, designed for the common possession of an international readership, was intended to counteract what Wells perceived, in his early and rather vexed participation in the League of Nations Union, as the "most vague, heterogeneous, and untidy assumptions about what the world of men was, what it had been, and therefore of what it could be" (*Outline* 2):

> My League of Nations Union experience had enforced my conviction that for a new order in the world there must be a new education and that for a real world civilization there must be a common basis of general ideas, that is to say a world-wide common-school education presenting the same vision of reality. (*Experiment* 616)

The Outline's new education toward global civilization was intended to achieve a common basis of general ideas and serve as a means of counteracting the effects of heightened disciplinarity within specialized fields—the "narrowing down from broad views to closer and more detailed study" that Wells attributed to

> the growing accumulation, refinement and elaboration of detailed knowledge, and to the consequent increased division in labour and specialization in the[se] fields . . . the teaching of history in schools has followed the movement of the student of history towards concentration and not the needs of the common citizen towards ampler views, because there has never yet been a proper recognition of the difference in aim between *study for knowledge,* the historical study of the elect, on the one hand, and teaching, *the general education of the citizen* for the good not only of the citizen, but of the community, on the other.
> ("History for Everybody" 888–89)

Even in this short passage, we can observe Wells in the early 1920s grappling with a problem similar to Eliot's in the 1940s: how to manage the rapid accumulation within disciplines of "detailed," increasingly specialized knowledge so as to distinguish education for the "elect" (the elite)—the strict accumulation and maintenance of the knowledge inherent to a discipline—from the general education of the citizen, which takes the form of "a common instruction and discipline in broad ideas and the general purpose" (889).[4]

In his further elaborations on the distinction between "elect" and "general" education, Wells attempts to define how "the idea of a universal history" can be conceived as an "educational framework" ("History for Everybody" 909) in common instruction:

> Education is really one of the newest of the arts and sciences. The idea of particular, exceptional people pursuing *learning* has been familiar to the world for scores of centuries, but the idea of preparing the minds of whole classes or whole communities for co-operations and common actions by a training in common ideas is a comparatively new one. The idea of education as learning still dominates us, and so it is that while we have numbers of teachers of history who are or who attempt to be, or who pose as historians who teach, we have comparatively few teachers of history who are teachers whose instrument is history. (889)

The notion of education as the pursuit of learning for a select few has failed to account for the preparation of the minds of whole communities in a common intellectual heritage. This failure has engendered a need on the part of would-be *whole* communities for precisely the sort of general education that *The Outline* will attempt to provide: an instrument in the training of minds as a "basis . . . [for a] scheme, of elementary historical teaching throughout the world" (890).[5] Unlike the "established historical authority" for whom the writing of such an instrument "would indeed have meant disaster to [an] academic reputation,"

> The standing of the present writer . . . who is by nature and choice as remote from academic respect as he is from a dukedom, enabled him to interest the public in history without any such sacrifice of dignity and distinction, such risks from hostile criticism, as a recognized authority would have had to incur. (*Outline* 4)

"It is not," argues Wells,

> that the writer has stepped into the field of popular history teaching and done something impertinently and roughly that would otherwise have been done well. It is that he has stepped

> in and done something urgently necessary that would not otherwise have been done at all. ("History for Everybody" 890)

Wells pointedly draws his public authority from remaining *outside* institutional affiliation with any specific academic discipline. Here history is indicated, but as his later debates with Hilaire Belloc would demonstrate, biology and natural history also serve as sites of Wells's intervention. The outside man of letters, impelled by urgent necessity, can take on the discursive authorities held by disciplines in order to mediate between esoteric academic enclaves and the general citizen's awareness of life's conditions. In doing so, he creates a role for the modern man of letters that realizes itself in its tacit critique of the ways in which modern disciplinary divisions, for all the intellectual labor they invest in elect study, actually have abandoned a more service-driven conception of general, public education.

If modern disciplines lack a guilty conscience about their alienating, atomic effects on general instruction, Wells proposes that the man of letters step in as that conscience, not only as a spokesperson for mediation between academia and the general citizen but also as a public reviewer of the status, aims, and scopes of modern disciplines:

> Now the virtues of the historian as of the specialist in any other science are extreme accuracy, fullness, delicacy and discrimination within the department of his work. He is usually not concerned with a philosophical review of the whole field of his science. . . . ("History for Everybody" 889)

In other words, the specialist has lost a fundamental sense of his field as a whole and developed a wariness of such a sense, as a justifiable result of his ever-narrowing quest for intradisciplinary accuracy and discrimination. This fundamental sense ought, therefore, to be left to the outside perspective of someone like himself. The man of letters can serve both as disciplinary conscience and disciplinary self-consciousness because he identifies himself not by specialized affiliation but by a kind of expansiveness bred within a sense that those who write well should be considered vital to the overall self-conception of any field and to its subsequent representation to the general citizen.

The ultimate outcome of these educational plans—*The Outline of History,* in its many updated republications—certainly should raise contemporary critical eyebrows as a historical text. But for all its dubious merit as a history, Wells's rationale for *The Outline* conceives a role for the modern man of letters oddly resonant with some current positions on the status of cultural studies within literary and humanistic fields, particularly those concerning the modern literary critic's relationship to cultural studies as a disciplinary practice. Cary Nelson and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, for instance, articulate a conception of cultural studies as a means to subvert the traditional claims made for discrete disciplinary boundaries in the modern university:

> Is it the duty of the new generations of academics to move freely across the cultural field taking up any and all issues and objects in an interpretive politics with no limits? Clearly one answer within cultural studies—though not necessarily an exclusive one—is yes. . . . The modern university represents its knowledge and expertise to the public primarily in disciplinary terms. But cultural studies now would speak to the world about the nation and the planet from the vantage point of educated citizenship, not only the circumscribed and contained expertise of disciplinarity. If that is to be one function of the university of the future, then the university will not be the sort of place it has been for decades. (17–18)

Wells's motivating impulses behind *The Outline of History* seem strangely echoed here in a late twentieth-century context that appears quite removed from his own. The audience is once again "the world," and "educated citizenship" is both the ultimate goal of cultural studies and the "vantage point" from which education concerning the nation and the planet will be conceived. Such future-oriented pronouncements can sound both critically exhilarating and implausibly utopian, as many have pointed out. Yet if we tend to associate the impulse to literary critical disciplinarity with modernism, cultural studies can sound intriguingly Edwardian—and Wellsian—in the extradisciplinary, international, transcultural perspective it constructs within educational institutions.[6]

The vast possibilities imagined for cultural studies through the utilization of an interpretive politics on any number of topics found in the cultural field also suggest an affinity with the critical vitality and "sense of the present moment" that Christopher Isherwood identifies in Wells:

> His vital appetite for experience and knowledge was prodigious, and he preserved it into his late seventies. He always wrote straight out of his immediate interests and enthusiasms, bubbling over with excitement. He could hardly wait to tell the world what was happening to him, what he was thinking. . . . To an altogether extraordinary degree, he had a sense of the present moment, with all its urgency, menace, opportunity, and challenge. He was aware of the stars in their courses, the earth turning, time passing, Gandhi spinning, Lenin dying by inches at his desk, Proust (whom he didn't like) writing, the bus-driver's wife cooking supper, China starving, America drunk on bathtub gin, the scientists trying to split the atom, the men of goodwill trying to unite Europe, and the peoples of the world already shivering in the shadow of another war. (40–41)

The appeal Wells has for Isherwood lies in his ability, to invoke Benedict Anderson, to apprehend the "meanwhile" of the moment (25)—but he extends that sense of imagined simultaneity beyond Anderson's national community to a global one, with Lenin dying and the bus driver's wife cooking supper, far away from each other yet equally involved in the life of the same planet. At the same time, Isherwood's reading of Wells's hypersensitive awareness of the "urgency, menace, opportunity, and challenge" of the present moment suggests a chronically busy and overextended intellectual—not unlike the chronically busy and hypersensitive image of the petit bourgeois, overextended in his Titanic attempts to apprehend globality. The exuberantly planetary reach that Wells attempted to maintain, coupled with the interdisciplinary scope of his critical interests (astronomy, geography, history, politics, literature, physics, and so on), sounds like an earlier version of cultural studies' stand against the specialized disciplinary enclosures generated and stabilized by the modern university, and its offer of a more direct address to the world on issues relating to the nation and the planet. This form of address refuses the automatic authority to speak that presumably would result from an emphasized affiliation with any major academic discipline and instead derives a public authority from speaking outside disciplinarity.

Isherwood's choice of vitality to characterize Wells is crucial here, and it too carries over to the contemporary example of cultural studies. For Isherwood, Wells's perspective is vital because the world, in a sense, is a place that he was a relative newcomer to for most of his life. The passage quoted above follows a longer discussion of Wells's personal grapplings with petit-bourgeois newcomer status to intellectual life, but rather than dismissing Wells on that basis, Isherwood sees in the scholarship boy's advance through educational opportunity to global awareness a unique perspective on the present moment unavailable to those who, perhaps, have always known they lived in the world and never gave it a second thought. In the same way, the feeling of newness that Nelson and Gaonkar attribute to cultural studies attests to their sense of a newly discovered locus for intellectual responsibility—the planet hitherto unavailable to the disciplined intellectual.

Both the Wellsian vision of the modern man of letters and this vision of cultural studies, therefore, stake their claims in terms of an urgent need to combat the falling away of their respective contemporary educational systems from a service-driven, expansive ethic. In the wake of a post–World War I world shattered by competing nationalisms and a modern educational system analogously perceived to be splintered, in Wells's time and our own, into competing, increasingly specialized disciplines, we find in each context a strong advocacy of an almost utopian vision of responsibilities for the cultural critic. This vision is best articulated by Nelson and Gaonkar: "the notion that facility with language, as a discipline's central skill and power, might give that discipline a special social, cultural, and historical responsibility" (2). Those who make it their professional goal to write transparently about their chosen objects, in each instance, thus serve as intellectual mediators between the academy and the public as well as critical surveyors of the placement of individual fields within the contemporary disciplinary landscape.

§

In his October 1924 "Commentary" on the recently published *1924 Meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science,* T. S. Eliot warns:

> No doubt, there never was a time more dangerous than now for the humble man of letters to paddle in the tides of science. There are so many volumes of popular science published, there are so many dubious studies calling themselves sciences—in which one

> active and impudent imagination is really almost as good as another—it is so easy for anyone to "talk intelligently"—that one must be very wary of making use of scientific generalizations. (1)

Eliot depicts the lone "humble man of letters" paddling valiantly against the ever more threatening "tides of science"—only to find, in many cases, an even more overwhelming adversary in the "popular science" produced by "active and impudent" imaginations. Calling one's "dubious stud[y]" a science, for Eliot, allows one to deceive a lay audience with the pretense of intelligent speech and, implicitly, with an illusory level of analytical rigor. The danger for Eliot's "humble man of letters"—who, presumably, would never involve himself in such pretense—lies in the ease with which valuable discursive authority, always hard-won for the man of letters, can be taken up and wielded with impunity by popular science writers on an unsuspecting populace.

Just before his cautions concerning popular science, Eliot argues of the more legitimate science of the *1924 Meetings of the British Association,* that

> An uninstructed reader can hardly be expected to derive much knowledge from so technical a paper as that of Sir W. H. Bragg on Crystal Analysis. And, from the point of view of the same reader, too many papers this year deal with applied science instead of universal conclusions. (2–3)

This issue of the *Criterion* also coincided with the death of Francis Bradley, whose work had served as the focus of Eliot's doctoral research; in his remarks on this occurrence, found directly above those on the *1924 Meetings of the British Association,* Eliot sarcastically comments on the "kingdoms of the world which have been conveyed to [the post-*Outline*] Mr. Wells," suggesting that the type of audience Wells enjoyed would "no doubt record the fact [of the death of Bradley] respectfully" and then "hurry on to the discussion of the latest scientific novelty" (1). Eliot's juxtaposition in three pages of these three criticisms—of popular intellectual Wells, of the increasingly alienating and application-oriented nature of modern science, and of the easy abuses of discursive authority that the field's distance from general comprehension allows—neatly encapsulates his concerns over the dangerously free-floating nature of modern discursive authority. To a general public one can sound authoritatively scientific despite a lack of scientific training—and one can capture attention, as a science fiction author and popular man of letters like Wells, largely because of the esoteric nature of modern scientific research. Established science, with its perceived genuine and highly technical relationship to natural phenomena, keeps itself at a far remove from the grasp of the lay person, who is therefore easily swayed to admiration and respect for "scientific novelty" and for the assumed authority of men of letters like Wells. When outsiders can assume the authority normally vested in an academic discipline, the result, in Eliot's vision, can be a sort of free-for-all where "talking intelligently" becomes a simple matter of knowing how to weight one's opinions with credible-sounding terminology.

The "humble man of letters" therefore finds as his adversaries both the esotericism of modern scientific research and the wide field that this leaves open to popular men of letters like Wells, to whom "kingdoms of the world" have been conveyed precisely because, Eliot contends, any man can assume the authority to "talk intelligently," or at least seem to do so, once this authority has become jarred loose from its strict disciplinary moorings and can dwell in the relatively open field of discourse. This brief "Commentary" is only one of Eliot's many jabs at Wells, critiques spurred on, in Evelyn Waugh's view, by Wells's unjustified sense of "obligation" to persist in appealing to the "popular Press" for vindication of the Darwinist views presented in *The Outline* (232), which had been attacked by Hilaire Belloc. Eliot's reviews of the Wells-Belloc debates, far from demonstrating any personal interest in competing analyses of natural history, critiqued the assumed public authority of both popular men of letters, and through this censorious approach worked to delineate a place for the new field of modern letters, which was wedded to modern disciplinarity and therefore potentially threatened by the free posturings of Wells and Belloc. As a "humble man of letters," confining his views on this very public debate to the back pages of the *Criterion,* Eliot highlights his own self-conception as a social critic for a very select audience—not a terribly surprising move for him. Yet in doing so he attempts to close the door on the impulse to educate the many, on the desire for the man of letters to mediate between disciplinarity and the general citizen, which we find in Wells and which still haunts, in the form of cultural studies, the contemporary critic for whose creation Eliot bears a crucial responsibility. At the same time, for both Eliot and Belloc, assuming a kind of expansive, cosmopolitan position becomes a crucial step in distinguishing a disciplined field of letters from the "provincial," secular British example perceived in Wells.

The highly publicized 1925–26 debate between Wells and Belloc over *The Outline of History* can be viewed as a debate between two popular men of letters who create and maintain their competing discourses by virtue of the ease with which each can appropriate the respective authorities of the disciplines they light upon in their argument. As the debate took on most famously the issue of Darwinian natural selection (as Wells conceived of it in *The Outline*) versus Belloc's creationist defense of fixed forms and a universe organized by design, Wells and Belloc are both able, at this point in intellectual history, to "talk intelligently" unhindered, defending their positions authoritatively and reinforcing that authority via credulous popular receptions of their competing amateur accounts. The ease with which both of these amateurs can cite scientific authorities in support of antithetical positions will serve, in Eliot's commentary on their works, as evidence of the ubiquitous, free-for-all nature of popular appropriations of authority rightfully belonging to modern disciplines.[7]

Before the publication of the articles that were compiled into *A Companion to Mr. Well's* Outline of History, the primary source used by Eliot, Belloc published "Mr. Wells's *Outline of History*" in a 1921 issue of the *London Mercury*. This article, a review of the first edition of *The Outline,* established opinions that Belloc would return to repeatedly in the 1925–26 debates:

> This book is written in and for a particular phase in the disintegration of a particular religion. That religion was the religion of the man who took for his authority in philosophy the literal meaning of every English word in an English seventeenth-century translation of the Canonical Catholic Scriptures: who knew nothing outside and hated and feared what might have expanded his knowledge. He instinctively shrank from the grandeur of Classical Antiquity, its expanded tradition and its fruit in the armies of Christendom and the Creed. The vast modern extension of physical and historical science blew his Authorised Version idol to pieces. He lost his Faith, but he desperately maintained its Ethic. (61)

In *A Companion* Belloc stresses what he conceives as the detrimental effects of Wells's "provincialism" (14ff)[8] on the writing of a universal history; he defines this tendency in Wells, as Eliot would define the term more generally in "What Is a Classic?" briefly as

> thinking that one "knows all about it" . . . a satisfied ignorance: a simple faith in the non-existence of what one has not experienced . . . a contempt for anything foreign and . . . an actual denial of things which the provincial person has not been made familiar with. (15)

The "provincial" author, like the "provincial" audience for which his book was written, has, fairly recently, lost "Faith" in the authority of English Protestantism[9] and is antipathetic toward "Classical Antiquity" and anything else "outside" his own limited knowledge. Against this "particular religion" Belloc will hold up Roman Catholic letters and the long tradition of European learning with which they are associated as a mode of understanding universal human history that can withstand "the vast modern extension of physical and historical science." Belloc's valorization of Roman Catholic letters, while necessary to an overall understanding of how he supports his anti-Darwinian position, rings true with Eliot, a year from his conversion to Catholicism, who considers Belloc "educated in a tradition formed by men who did think, and is therefore able to 'place' Wells rather better than Wells places him" ("Recent Books" 254).

Eliot's "Recent Books" review of the debates between Wells and Belloc complements the exchange nicely, in that he effectively claims letters as a field for the disciplined few and attempts to place both popular writers in the sphere of undisciplined, amateur letters, at a far remove from the educative benefit that both would claim to offer:

> This is sometimes called the age of the specialist; it is also the age of the brilliant and voluble amateur. In some sciences, as mathematics and physics, the specialist is highly respected . . . in others, such as history and theology, which have fallen into a certain decline, the amateur has it almost all his own way; and is judged, even from his lack of credentials, to speak with more authority than the specialist. An examination of the books under review will justify this assertion; a comparison of their sales would probably prove it. (253)

The "age of the specialist" captures the interwar concept of modern disciplinarity that Wells attempted to mitigate with *The Outline*—namely, the concept of the increased refinement and specialization of knowledge, to the neglect of the "general education of the citizen." Hence the arrival of "brilliant and voluble amateurs"—more "voluble" in the case of Wells and Belloc than "brilliant," as the rest of the review suggests[10]—who to their lay audiences possess more authority over their adopted subjects than specialists in those subjects, precisely by virtue of their "lack" of disciplinary "credentials." For Eliot, the danger presented by Wells and Belloc lies, ostensibly, in their simplification of a complex subject through "undertak[ing] to show each other up in their knowledge of sciences in which both are amateurs" (253), yet Eliot's concerns also stem from a more central preoccupation with the Wells-Belloc debates as examples of what he considers the demeaning of "letters" as an emerging disciplined field.

Eliot's intervention demonstrates at once the evolving silliness of this debate—certainly not Wells's shining hour—and secures for the critic the right to mediate interdisciplinary discussion. He usurps the role that Wells had taken for himself in order to combat the "provincialism" that he finds in both Wells and Belloc. But this move cannot be accomplished without a more expansive understanding of the responsibilities of letters than that usually accorded to Eliot.

The location of one's discursive authority precisely in one's ability to remain outside the specialized knowledges of particular disciplines signals to Eliot a sort of free-for-all of discursive authority, where

> We distrust them both; we agree with them both. But journalism begets journalism; only journalism can triumph over journalism. In such a debate as this, the reader is only convinced of what he believed already. (254)

The dangerously proliferative aspect Eliot denounces in the journalism of Wells and Belloc, where "our interest and amusement at the spectacle of these two highly paid pugilists is likely to eclipse our interest in the points at issue" (253), echoes an earlier disparaging characterization that he makes in "The Function of Criticism" (1923) of the contemporary literary critic who "owes his livelihood" either to the "violence and extremity of his opposition to other critics" or to "some trifling oddities of his own with which he contrives to season the opinions which men already hold, and which out of vanity or sloth they prefer to maintain" (14). Whether speaking of critical writing that would take the literary object as its focus of study or of the more ambiguous focus of self-appointed public intellectuals like Wells and Belloc, Eliot draws a connection between the two in terms of the appeal to public "spectacle" that both forms of writing accomplish—specifically, a spectacle comprised of fighting men, either critics who develop their own opinions via violent and extreme public opposition to other critics or "highly paid pugilists" who distract readers from the point at issue with the "amusement" of journalistic boxing.

Where Wells's primary objective, as Eliot perceives it, had always been to tell his undifferentiated assortment of readers, who travel in "the first class as well as the third class compartments, what they are ready to accept" and to "impose no great strain upon the[ir] minds" ("Journalists" 237), for Eliot and his contemporary "serious men of letters,"

> Our public is not yet in existence. We can only hope to provide thought of a very different kind and very different tendency, formed in very different categories, for a small number of thinking people prepared for new "dogma." (238)

"Our public" cannot come into existence while "there is still a public for [Wells] to direct—and . . . there is no one else to direct it" (238); to train a "small number of thinking people" into an audience commensurate to the new "dogma" that the serious men of letters will produce requires a measure of disciplined group solidarity unheard of in the earlier "world of getting on," with its lingering, still-docile public.[11] What should concern us, I think, is Eliot's reliance on a preexisting, self-interested, upwardly mobile model for his counterdefinition of a modern, disciplined field of letters. The disinterest implicit in the work of these modern men of letters who would provide a challenge (where Wells had only supplied what was already acceptable) rests on Eliot's critical presentation of a personal, competitive narrative between men—between seniors and juniors, fathers and sons—in order to characterize and personalize the larger binaries (self-interest versus group disinterest, upward versus lateral mobility, a large and unthinking public versus a small and discriminating one) with which he hopes to delineate professional letters from preprofessional others. The cultural work of the modern critic, therefore, organizes itself for Eliot not only in how the critic maintains an interpretive relation to certain disciplinary objects, be they literary objects or elements within the "whole way of life" of culture, but also in the transformative effects of the field structure that Eliot hopes to generate for modern letters, which would enable the potential for educative change via letters to exist solely at the discretion of regulated groups of disinterested men like himself. To make this shift palatable, however, requires Eliot's public distancing of the man of letters from past models and from the mediating claims for educating the modern Everyman that these models stood for.

Eliot's critiques of Wells center on his perceived failure to demonstrate the disinterested, critical manner that Eliot has in mind for the disciplined field of letters, a manner that he imagines will take not only the literary text as its disciplinary object but also the religious, historical, and scientific topics that public intellectuals like Wells have failed to treat adequately. In treating the boundaries between disciplines as permeable, Wells and Belloc are placed outside the realm of legitimate, disciplined letters; their unwillingness to respect the authorities of specialists and their "pugilistic" eagerness to assume those discursive authorities motivated by what Eliot believes to be high popular sales and public intellectual visibility exclude them from the field of disinterested specialists in letters and exposes them as imposters:

> Mr. Belloc says that Mr. Wells has never learned to think. He is probably quite right. Whether he has himself learned to think is not conclusively proved by the present discussion, for in such discussion the processes of thinking play very little part; the form of assertion is everything; and the faculty which is chiefly exercised by the kind of activities in which Mr. Belloc and Mr. Wells engage in is the faculty of bluff. ("Recent Books" 254)

The "processes of thinking" remain significantly absent from the published debates between Wells and Belloc, as Eliot reads them. His emphasis on the "form of assertion" as the primary characteristic of their debates, with the "faculty of bluff" as the source of all their assumed discursive authority, allows Eliot to position himself and modern letters in the role of policing the claims of multiple fields, with an eye to delegitimating the access to the public that older men of letters like Wells and Belloc possess. Not only does the modern man of letters, by Eliot's example, dismiss from the field of letters the claims of these older men, but this new, disciplined man of letters, by virtue of his writerly recognition of how the "form of assertion" and the "faculty of bluff" can too easily mimic the claims of "real," disinterested disciplines, can also serve to police disciplinary boundaries, so that the benefit of actual, legitimate knowledge in the sciences, for example, will not be swallowed up in the distracting "pugilistic spectacles" of would-be men of letters. The call to heightened specialization for the modern man of letters that we see impelling Eliot's critiques of men like Wells and Belloc thus defines that specialization in terms of the privileged discursive place that the man of letters holds as one at home with public rhetoric and therefore best suited to demonstrate when others mishandle that rhetoric (and the authority that accrues to it) through the misrepresentation of the work of other disciplines. If the "atomic view of society" persists as an inevitable symptom of modernity's fragmentation of shared knowledge, then Eliot's modern man of letters stands in a position at once similar and opposed to where Wells placed him. That is, if Wells located himself outside disciplinary affiliations, as a mediator between the "elect" knowledge of disciplines and the modern Everyman, Eliot also takes the "elect" status of certain disciplinary knowledges as a historical given but derives for the newly professionalizing sphere of letters a measure of public authority via the rhetorical policing it can offer against the free-floating success of undisciplined intellectualism and the borrowed, mishandled authority exemplified by Wells.

As I probably do not need to point out, Eliot's version of intellectual professionalism in the field of letters "won out" over Wells—and for very necessary reasons. Who wouldn't agree with Eliot's assessments of Wells? Who would challenge the need in professional literary criticism for like-minded, educated collectivities of people who monitor each others' writing, keeping arguments about rightful disciplinary objects in-house, so to speak, rather than flaunting impassioned, unmonitored differences openly, like Wells and Belloc? And yet this tension in Eliot's dismissals, between insistence on the need for a disciplined field of letters and the atomization he would later come to associate with such discipline in "Notes Towards a Definition of Culture," also finds a further complication in the suggestive similarities between internationalist, global histories like Wells's and the ideas concerning culture within Christian society that Eliot would devise. We may find, in the end, that the winning story of high modern irony toward Edwardian progressivism plays out in the decline narratives that literary critical professionalism has incorporated into its disciplinary history—narratives that make the preservation of culture a primary professional rationale over and against naive popular progressivism and the endlessly proliferating critical objects assumed by older men of letters like Wells. But later moments, when we find Eliot unironically imagining his own, unlikely post–World War II European utopias, should give us pause. The Europe Eliot imagines in "What Is a Classic?" for example, invites parallels with "provincial" perspectives like Wells's, suggesting that, as J. M. Coetzee emphasizes, the versions of supranational thinking that emerge from provinciality deserve further attention beyond modernism's cursory dismissals—the point at which I began this essay. Despite the obvious secular/sacred divide between Wells and Eliot, Eliot nevertheless participates in a kind of earnest, forward-looking utopianism of international range, as Coetzee suggests in his essay, also called "What Is a Classic?":

> The process I have been describing, extrapolating from Eliot's 1944 lecture, is one of the most spectacular that occur to me of a writer attempting to *make* a new identity, claiming that identity not on the basis of immigration, settlement, residence, domestication, acculturation, as other people do, or not only by such means—since Eliot with characteristic tenacity did all of the above—but by defining nationality to suit himself and then using all of his accumulated cultural power to impose that definition on educated opinion, and by resituating nationality within a specific—in this case Catholic—brand of internationalism or cosmopolitanism in terms of which he would emerge not as a Johnny-come-lately but as a pioneer and indeed as a kind of prophet. . . . (6)

Coetzee's reading calls attention to one problem with Edward Said's enduring account of Eliotic critical professionalism: Eliot's narrow compensatory affiliations with nation (England), religion (Catholicism), and culture (classicism) collapse a little too easily into Said's overarching reading of the intellectual narrowness wrought by certain strains of literary critical professionalism (16–20). That is, Said's reading leaves out this other, admittedly bizarre yet "pioneer[ing]," international side to Eliot's classicism that Coetzee sees and appropriates for his own self-critical approach to South African "provinciality." While Eliot's determination that the *Aeneid,* in the end, can be the only true "universal classic" ("What Is a Classic" 67) sounds quite silly, and his selections are of course Eurocentric overall, his rationale for that choice is somewhat heartening. Universal classics supposedly counter the effects of modern provincialism, a slippery term that he defines most succinctly as "a distortion of values, the exclusion of some, the exaggeration of others, which springs, not from lack of wide geographical perambulation, but from applying standards acquired within a limited area, to the whole of human experience" (69). And yet Eliot's perspective on Europe is very provincial in scope; he offers a way to link high modern and Edwardian historicity and import them, as Coetzee makes clear, into a discussion of belated cultural cosmopolitanism for the troubling topic of white male men of letters—like Coetzee—who also prefer supranational over national traditions. While Said's secular criticism defines itself on the whole against narrow belief systems (national, religious, cultural, or otherwise) in favor of the expansive cosmopolitan critical model of Erich Auerbach, the too-reliably narrow, distorting, exclusive, and incipiently professional Eliot who impels his critique should give us pause. A selective reading of Eliot can yield an account of a narrow, backward-looking origin of critical professionalism, but those moments when we find Eliot reading arbitrary, even contradictory attributes into nationality in favor of his own particular universalism complicate that story and that ironic professional prehistory—suggesting an unlikely affinity with the provincial internationalism of a figure like Wells.

Notes

1. H. G. Wells's *The Outline of History* was first published in 1920, and the second edition came out in 1923. The revised third edition, published in 1925, sparked debates between Hilaire Belloc and Wells over natural selection and attracted a critique by T. S. Eliot in the *Criterion*. For a detailed account of *The Outline*'s publication history, see Murphy.

2. Joseph E. Stiglitz opens *Globalization and Its Discontents* with a problem of contemporary characterization oddly similar to Wells's: how to present international bureaucrats as something other than "faceless symbols of the world economic order" (1)—a problem associated with the failure of the IMF and the World Bank to live up to the Keynesian "promise of global institutions" (214). To echo Wells, Stiglitz's international economic bureaucrats persist in a kind of global Bumbledom. The complication hinges on the case for "global civil society" (214) that Stiglitz wants to make—a society that would require the continued life of international bureaucrats—even as he also directs an indictment against the ruinous effects of the "global governance without global government" (22) that he finds in the IMF's, WTO's, and World Bank's history of applied economic policy in developing countries.

3. For a more recent critical approach to human rights and the bildungsroman, see Joseph Slaughter.

4. For a modernist perspective on the dilemmas posed by the proliferation of disciplinary knowledges, see Eliot's "Notes Towards a Definition of Culture" (120–21) and "The Perfect Critic":

> When there is so much to be known, when there are so many fields of knowledge in which the same words are used with different meanings, when everyone knows a little about a great many things, it becomes increasingly difficult for anyone to know whether he knows what he is talking about or not. (10)

5. The indoctrinating quality of Wells's goals for the general citizen tends to negate the overall legitimacy, or at the very least the applicability, of his global aims, both for present readers and for critics contemporary with Wells who were less enthusiastic than Forster. D. S. Mirsky, participating in a symposium of articles on *The Outline* that Eliot, as editor of the *Criterion,* called for in the early 1930s, summed up best the concerned skepticism about authoritarianism that *The Outline* raised in suggesting its compatibility with Wells's recent, "more explicit pronouncements in favour of a 'liberal fascism' and 'an enlightened Nazism.'"

6. For more on the relationships between the field of cultural studies and theorizations of cultural transnationalism, see Arjun Appadurai and Peter Hitchcock.

7. Wells's position on Darwinian natural selection was, especially as seen through a late twentieth-century perspective, a relatively uncomplicated one, drawn primarily from his education under Thomas Henry Huxley at the South Kensington Normal School of Science. In his *Experiment in Autobiography* Wells lauds both Darwin and Huxley for "put[ting] the fact of organic evolution upon an impregnable base of proof and demonstration" (162) while censuring the "little Mr. Whippersnapper" sort of young, contemporary scientist who, "ignorant of the conditions of mental life in the early nineteenth century and standing for the most part on the ground won, cleared and prepared for them by these giants, find[s] a perverse pleasure in belittling them." While allowing that the work of Darwin and Huxley was "in a thousand respects . . . incomplete and tentative," Wells contends that

> any little Mr. Whippersnapper who chooses to use the vastly greater resources of to-day against them can find statements made by them that

> were insufficient or slightly erroneous, and theoretical suggestions that have been abandoned and disproved, and he can catch a bit of personal publicity from the pulpit or the reactionary press by saying that Darwin has been discredited or Huxley superseded. (162)

The scenario Wells depicts, of retrospective critiques of Darwin and Huxley that implement the benefit of scientific hindsight in the exploitative interests of "personal publicity," has a great deal in common with his understanding of Belloc's scornful repudiation of Darwin in the Catholic press—indeed, Belloc could almost be one of the whippersnappers that Wells describes. Wells also sets himself up here, once again, as a kind of disciplinary self-consciousness, though in keeping with the wide range of topics that he considers under the responsibility of the man of letters, he has moved from history to a survey of how contemporary biology forgets its forebears in the interests of consolidating authority around new discovery and heightened specialization.

8. Since Wells had the reputation of being an ardent supporter of the League of Nations at this time, Belloc was one of the few people to criticize him for "provincialism" rather than for his more widely attacked internationalism.

9. Belloc's conception of Protestantism, as becomes apparent in the two books and article I cite, situates it in complete dependence on Roman Catholicism—borrowing its scriptures, its system of belief, and so on—and thus he attempts to hammer home the fact that what "provincial" English Protestants think is a religion completely in defiance to Roman Catholicism is in fact a religion that has borrowed all of its writings and procedures from Roman Catholicism.

10. In addition to the three books that comprise the Wells-Belloc feud, Eliot is also reviewing *The Life of Jesus* by John Middleton Murry, *The Anglo-Catholic Faith* by T. A. Lacey, and *Modernism in the English Church* by Percy Gardner. The reviews of these "brilliant and voluble amateurs" locate "brilliance," on the whole, with these three books. Wells and Belloc are the "voluble" amateurs.

11. Wells, on reading Eliot's article, was reportedly quite shocked to find himself projected into the past as a "spent" intellectual voice, to find "that Eliot represented the new and he the old and that the essay ["Journalists"] was a form of obituary" (Coren 240). That an older conception of letters could co-exist with a younger variant Wells seems to have taken for granted up until his discovery of Eliot's animosity toward the lone, self-interested model that he takes Wells to represent.

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Reviews

Welcome to the first issue of the book review section of *Twentieth-Century Literature.* Why has this section come into existence? Is there a need for it?

Journals in other disciplines, such as history, offer review sections that span scholarship across the entire field. There is, for example, no publication in literary studies comparable to the *Journal of American History,* which publishes short reviews of almost every published book of academic history, in addition to covering museum exhibits and documentary films. A conscientious reader of *JAH* can thus be confident of being kept intellectually up to date. *PMLA* does not take on such a task. Perhaps it is impossible, given that English and foreign-language departments together employ far more faculty members than do history departments, and thus generate far more books to be reviewed. At any rate, the task of reviewing academic publications in literary studies has fallen to the more specialized journals. *Modern Fiction Studies, Contemporary Literature, American Literary History,* and *American Literature,* among others, all publish excellent reviews and review essays, and *American Literature* performs a useful service through its very short notices of an extensive range of new books.

Still, worthy books go unreviewed or underreviewed. All of us who have published academic books (or all save a very fortunate few) know well the feeling of ushering that child of our labor, heart, and intellect into an abyss populated only by other unnoticed monographs. And the problem is not just injured vanity, nor is it some unreasonable glut of publications by the university presses. The university presses, in fact, are now beginning to behave more like commercial presses as they base their publishing decisions on potential sales more than they ever did in the past. The problem is that many of us, perhaps most of us (and the editors of this section include ourselves), feel a need to know more about what our colleagues across the field are doing. What this book review section, like any other, seeks to do is to make our community of readers and writers aware of each other's work. We will try to diminish the void, the abyss, into which so much valuable work tends to be lost and forgotten.

Any venue that will attract attention and thought to new work has reason to come into being. It has been a great pleasure for us, in the brief time since we have taken on this job, to see the wealth of new books that have crossed our desks and to contact scholars who will engage with the dialogues that these books launched and deserve to have continued.

Here at the book review section of *Twentieth-Century Literature,* we hope to foster a dialogue between generations by looking to review books and solicit reviews from emerging as well as established scholars. As coeditors, we will share this important task of selection and ensure that a variety of critical and theoretical perspectives are represented. Such a procedure reflects, as well, the current state of the field, where no single critical paradigm prevails. We will watch for new perspectives on works that are considered canonical as well as works on the posited margins to those posited centers. We hope you will join this conversation and read on.

Gettin' You Offn th' Groun

Ezra Pound and African-American Modernism
edited by Michael Coyle
Orono, Maine: National Poetry Foundation, 2001. 272 pages

Steven Yao

In the early 1990s, writers and scholars such as Toni Morrison and Michael North broke from established modes of African-American literary criticism. During the previous decade, Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Houston Baker, among others, had successfully legitimated modernist African-American literary expression by demonstrating its internal logic and broader significance as a tradition distinct from canonical Anglo-American high modernism. Pushing such thinking to the next logical step, Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* (1992) and North's *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (1994) showed how ideas of "blackness" and an engagement with African-American culture informed that movement (and in Morrison's case, American literature as a whole) in all its most familiar forms and achievements. These works have cast a long shadow, and their influence has helped to broaden approaches to a range of canonical writers. Pursuing avenues opened up by the work of Morrison and North, *Ezra Pound and African-American Modernism* features a wide variety of contributions that trace the extended and diverse connections between the most controversial of canonical modernist writers and various aspects and representatives of African-American culture during the early part of the twentieth century.

If at first glance this pairing seems unlikely, perhaps even strained, we should remember that Pound made a career as well as a poetic out of surprising and productive juxtapositions. Moreover, as Coyle notes in his introduction, "Because Ezra Pound took on so much, Pound scholarship is punctuated by the kind of title 'Pound and . . .'" (3). Another installment in the informal (and still growing) "Pound and . . ." series, then, *Ezra Pound and African-American Modernism* includes essays that touch on several different phases of the poet's long career as well as trace interesting connections and intersections with various African-American writers. Together, these essays exhibit an admirable coherence, achieving a strikingly high and uniform level of overall quality. In addition, the volume presents a brief selection of primary documents in the form of the intermittent though nevertheless revealing correspondence between Pound and Langston Hughes. Most important, perhaps, the essays in the collection do not stop at merely documenting Pound's racism (a simple enough task to perform on practically any white writer of the period, given the political realities of American society at the time) and then proceed to condemn his work on that basis. Instead, they go on to trace the function and consequences, for both his own poetry and his relationship to some major black modernist and even contemporary poets, of Pound's ambivalent mixture of admiration and condescension toward African-Americans and African-American culture over the course of his career.

A passage from an undated, unpublished essay called FOR THE AFRO=AMERICAN LANGUAGE (quoted in both Jonathan Gill's and Alec Marsh's contributions) gives the flavor of Pound's mixed attitude explored in the volume:

> God damn it I wish the yellow octaroons quadroons and spittoons wd. stop talking like the cheap whites. . . . There is only one time I really want to kick a black man and that is when I

> hear him blahing like a Haavud sophomore. Damn it, nigguh; when you got som'thin' better n the white man; why the hell can't you keep it. (qtd. in Gill 84; see also Marsh 130)

While the book bears some marks of its beginnings as a special edition of *Paideuma* (a journal that only recently expanded its focus beyond the strict confines of scholarship on Pound), it successfully demonstrates the potential appeal of its chosen subject to readers of a variety of critical stripes and historical persuasions.

Two major sections, each with four contributions, comprise the main body of the volume. The first section, "Pound and the Poets of African-American Modernism," traces the complex and often vexed relationship between Pound and some of the most notable black American writers of the twentieth century. For example, Kathryne Lindberg's extended essay discusses the shared interest in the political movement and rhetorical strategies of syndicalism exhibited by Pound and Claude McKay in the early teens. Building on this common fascination, dating from 1912, Lindberg goes on to show both "an important link as well as a disconnect" (12) between the two poets, arguing that

> "Syndicalism," as class warfare with complex ties to violence, riots, masses and the déclassé, covers both McKay's adoption of black Jamaican resistance culture and Pound's aesthetic pretensions among the racist and elitist circles spun out from *The New Age.* (13)

The depth and range of her treatment usefully brings together two major poets who have heretofore been relegated to separate spheres by established critical practices. In a comparably nuanced, if less sustained, way, Jonathan Gill examines the correspondence between Pound and Langston Hughes (the full text of which also appears in the volume, compiled and usefully annotated by David Roessel). Tracing misreadings by both poets of each other's work and taking into account their different subject positions and political agendas, Gill nevertheless argues that "Pound's Modernism and Hughes's role in the Harlem Renaissance function as more than merely analogues or allied projects, but as something approaching a single literary enterprise" (79). Next, C. K. Doreski moves forward in time to discuss "the immediacy and significance of Pound's politicized aesthetic" (90) through its ostensible influence on Melvin Tolson, a younger African-

American contemporary of Pound's. Like Pound, Tolson also produced highly politicized journalism along with poetry, and Doreski parallels the ideas and positions expressed in such prose works as *Jefferson and/or Mussolini, L'Ideale Statale,* and *Fascism as I Have Seen It* with Tolson's in the "Caviar and Cabbage" columns written for the *Washington Post* (1937–44) and his first book of poetry, *Rendezvous with America* (1944). For Doreski, these texts "provide an engaging exploration of and resistance to the anxiety of Poundian influence as they reconfigure the aesthetic and political complicity of Modernism, fascism, and democracy during the Second World War" (90). In direct contrast to one strain of Pound criticism at least, Doreski further asserts that and Pound and Tolson each demonstrate through their political prose writings "a literary sensibility comfortable with a Bakhtinian, centrifugal authority that denies the fascistic unitary force inherent in modernist aesthetics and politics" (90–91). In the last essay of the first section, Reed Way Dasenbrock traces connections between Pound and Caribbean poet and recent Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott. Explicitly taking up issues of postcoloniality, postmodernity, and their troubled relationship, Dasenbrock argues for the fundamental aesthetic connection between modernist and postcolonial writing, setting both directly against the strategies of postmodernism. Such a configuration, Dasenbrock asserts, not only more accurately reflects the careers of such writers as V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Ngugi wa Thinog'o, Anita Desai, and Chinua Achebe, among others, but it also enables us to see modernism as "the product of the margins reacting to Western culture as it moves to and to an extent is incorporated in the center or defines a new center" (115). To instantiate such a claim, Dasenbrock goes on to draw broad parallels between the epic ambitions of Pound and Walcott and their mutual engagements with Homer and Dante. In his view, it was Pound "who showed Walcott how a contemporary epic was possible through a dialogue with the great poets of the past" (118). Thus he highlights Walcott's classical and European references in *Omeros* (1990), emphasizing the poet's admiration for works in the classical Western canon. If this view repeats some of the work already done on Walcott in other critical circles, it nevertheless usefully raises such concerns for an audience more accustomed to a canonical modernist focus, thereby providing avenues for further, more detailed discussions. In fact, collectively, the essays in the first section of the book succeed most at demonstrating the productivity of actively relating Pound to writers in other traditions and circumstances, hinting at ways to further expand and complicate the modernist canon.

The second section, "African-American Presences in Pound's Work," opens with Alec Marsh's finely detailed discussion of a rejected fragment of Canto 21 and its implications for understanding the role of African-American figures in *The Cantos* as a whole. Combining a felicitous archival discovery with an explicit engagement with *Playing in the Dark,* as well as other works of African-American literary criticism, Marsh offers up the passage from the drafts of Canto 21 as evidence to support Morrison's argument about "a dark, abiding, signing Africanist presence" in American literature, one "crucial to American writers' sense of Americanness" (qtd. in Marsh 128). For Marsh, the composition and ultimate rejection of this passage, which presents in "blackvoice" a highly minstrelized scene in which George Washington is murdered by a slave (tellingly named Sambo) whose wife (Dinah) the former president has bedded, demonstrates the early centrality of African-American figures to Pound's sense of America in his epic, the better-known examples of black speakers that appear later in the Pisan Cantos notwithstanding.

Next, Aldon Nielsen provides details about a reference made to one Elder Lightfoot (real name Solomon Lightfoot Michaux) in Canto 95, an African-American minister active in the Washington, D.C., area during Pound's incarceration at St. Elizabeth's and someone whom the *Washington Post* once described as "the best-known colored man in the United States today" (qtd. in Nielsen 145). Nielsen diagnoses the difficulty of finding adequate information about Elder Lightfoot Michaux in extant Pound scholarship as a product of the methodological blindspots of white (and other) scholars. Filling in useful biographical information on Michaux, Nielsen then proceeds to illuminate the racialist (as well as racist) ideology that subtends *The Cantos* by way of Pound's conception of the work of Leo Frobenius. For Nielsen, Pound built on Frobenius's admiration for the peasantry as a potential source of revitalizing energy for a dying culture, but his

> peculiar contribution to this mode of primitivism was to map it onto eugenics, and this is why the same poet who showed uncommon reverence for the art and language forms of ancient Africa could at the same time exhibit such inane racialist beliefs about contemporary African-Americans. (154)

In the third essay of this section, Burton Hatlen explores "Pound's oscillations over political and social issues, including issues of race, in the years from 1926 to 1931" (161). More specifically, Hatlen examines Pound's interaction with Mike Gold, principal editor of *New Masses,* a journal affiliated with the communist party in the US from its establishment in 1926. Pound not only contributed to the journal, Hatlen shows, but he also read it assiduously at least until 1931, "when he selected thirteen pages of poetry from recent issues, including eight anonymous 'Negro Songs of Protest,' for inclusion in his Profile anthology, published in Milan in 1932" (162). Through his extended discussion and recovery effort, Hatlen nicely illuminates a cultural moment when "revolutionary" currents from both the right and left could engage each other productively, though clearly for their own purposes. Ultimately, Hatlen argues for a progressive tinge to Pound's view of African-American culture based on the details of his engagement with *New Masses;* but if this view assumes a somewhat defensive posture, the essay as a whole nevertheless successfully works against simplified rejections of Pound's work based on charges of overt and unchanging racism as displayed in his abundant anti-Semitic remarks.

Finally, Kevin Young, a contemporary African-American poet, explores connections between Pound in all the various phases or personae of his career and both the canonical (that is, white) figures of modernism and various African-American writers of the twentieth century. More evocative and suggestive than conventionally scholarly, Young's essay posits a conceptual relation between the Poundian adoption of personae and an African-American strategy of "counterfeiting" as a means to "forge" (in both senses of the word) "black authority in a world not necessarily of their own making" (199). Most importantly, however, Young attests to Pound's ongoing significance as a potential source of both inspiration and provocation for contemporary poets of whatever background or cultural affiliation.

Even without these substantial essays, the volume would merit attention for the primary materials it presents, such as the correspondence between Pound and Langston Hughes and the brief exchange between Pound and another of the most renowned poets associated with the Harlem Renaissance, Countee Cullen. These letters, which together span a period of 25 years, from 1931 to 1956, first arose from Pound's effort to instigate an English translation of Frobenius, the German anthropologist who not only explored African civilizations and advocated their historical importance for world culture but also supplied the poet with the term *paideuma* for the concept of cultural morphology. But they also underscore Pound's deep interest in African culture and his active, if spotty, engagement with African-Americans. Particularly interesting here are the brief comments that Pound offers to Hughes regarding the latter's work in *Fine Clothes to the Jew, Not Without Laughter,* and *Simple Speaks His Mind.* As a whole, this correspondence at once documents Pound's breadth of interest and validates the argument underwriting the entire volume: that we have much to gain and more to do in exploring the complex, sometimes vexed, but always interesting relationships between canonical (white) and other versions of or approaches to modernism. Finally, two useful reviews close out the volume, one by art historian Mary Ann Calo on recent studies of African-American modernist visual culture and the other by Kevin Dettmar, aimed mainly at more traditional Pound scholars, on North's *The Dialect of Modernism.*

Overall, building on powerful existing work and charting heretofore unexplored terrain, *Ezra Pound and African-American Modernism* stands as a useful model for the kind of scholarship that does for literary criticism what Pound sought to do for poetry in his day: Make it new.

Revising Lyric Subjectivity

Lyric Interventions: Feminism, Experimental Poetry,
and Contemporary Discourse
by Linda A. Kinnahan
Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004. 277 pages

Lynn Keller

The subject matter of Linda A. Kinnahan's *Lyric Interventions*—innovative feminist lyric in Britain and North America since the 1960s—inevitably situates this study in the midst of multiple contentious debates: disagreements among scholars and among poets about what constitutes innovation or experiment in contemporary poetry, about the nature of lyric subjectivity and its relation to public politics, the place of personal expression and the *I* in poetic discourse, the current viability of the lyric, the role of feminism and feminist writers in recent experimental movements, the goals and strategies appropriate to feminist writing, and the political value and force of linguistically innovative writing. Fortunately, Kinnahan, while making her own positions clear, is committed to documenting carefully the discussions that have taken place in the last 20 years. Her assertion at the opening of the acknowledgments, "To my mind, communities make books possible," proves to be an ethical principle enacted in her summaries of previous conversations, her generous citations from preceding scholarship, and her responsible recounting of recent literary history. In this way, she contributes more to clarity than contention.

Kinnahan began this project when experimental writing by women had received scant scholarly attention. As she explains, feminist thinkers and histories were generally elided from narratives surrounding the recognized experimentalism of Language writing, in part because the Language movement is highly theorized and extensively engaged with various forms of contemporary theory, and theory still tends to be treated as a masculine domain. Feminist experimentalists were even more thoroughly excluded from narratives—and anthologies—of feminist writing, because the dominant feminist aesthetic located feminist activity in poetic content rather than form, insisting on the importance of accessible reportage and authentic personal testimony. Happily, both critical and poetic fashions have been changing, so that by now a good deal has been written on, for instance, the poetry of Susan Howe, Lyn Hejinian, and Harryette Mullen (not necessarily from a feminist perspective); significant essay collections by experimental poets such as Howe, Hejinian, Joan Retallack, and Kathleen Fraser have made their mark; important anthologies of women's experimentalist poetry have appeared, along with feminist critical studies or literary histories like Ann Vickery's feminist genealogy of Language writing; and, increasingly, female experimentalists have been able to publish their work through presses with wider distribution.

This book's contributions remain distinctive, however, in the issues the study foregrounds, the blend of feminist and cultural studies perspectives it consistently employs, and the particular poetry it examines. *Lyric Interventions* approaches experimentalism by attending to the way in which feminist thinking has intervened in poets' conceptualizations of the lyric subject. This shifts emphasis from what Kinnahan calls, perhaps too absolutely, the poststructuralist "banishment" of the *I* and of the personal (xiii, 12) that was central to early discussions of Language poetry toward consideration of the social and economic conditions shaping female subjectivity and affecting its reformations in experimental poetries by women. Thus, while Kinnahan opens the book explaining that as a reader she is "drawn simultaneously to the texture of linguistic surprise and the risky strategies of social intervention" that energize the "experimental, innovative feminist lyric" (xiii), *Lyric Interventions* proves more consistently attentive to social interventions than to linguistic textures. Its artful readings of specific poems—which are certainly sensitive to formal and especially visual qualities—remain consistently focused on issues of gendered subjectivity, particularly as subjectivity is defined within specific racial histories, immigration policies, economic conditions, and feminist discourses. The book valuably brings together writers from two continents in order to highlight both the international exchanges and the impact of national context on experimental women's writing. While Kinnahan is to be commended for bringing the attention of American readers to the British experimentalist scene (an effort in which other critics, such as Keith Tuma and Romana Huk, have also been engaged), it is equally significant that *Lyric Interventions* is broadening the canon of American female experimentalists. We need to hear more about such too-rarely discussed writers as Barbara Guest, Kathleen Fraser, M. Nourbese Philip, and Erica Hunt, the North Americans whose work Kinnahan analyzes, if we are to build accurate understandings of poetry's recent history, character, or accomplishments.

The opening chapter usefully surveys necessary backgrounds, tracing the evolution of feminist poetics since the concept's emergence in the 1960s, the major arguments about subjectivity and specifically lyric subjectivity that have circulated around experimental poetics, and feminists' varying or conflicted positions in relation to those arguments. Many feminists during the 1990s, for instance, were wary of narrow identity politics and essentialist notions of the self, yet questioned whether the lyric *I*, perhaps not yet available to women, should be forsaken. In terms of poetic practices, the divide between experimental and expressive poetries so widely invoked at the time was, Kinnahan argues, not so sharp among women poets, since a number of female experimentalists were exploring how the intimate realm of private experience is constructed and mediated through the public. Their work contributed to the recent shift Kinnahan observes among both feminist and nonfeminist critics in which "the issue increasingly addressed is not whether lyric subjectivity (or variant traces of voice, interiority, self-history, etc.) is evident but how it is deployed and what that deployment assumes about poetry's function" (13). The history of the journal *HOW(ever),* with which the chapter closes, provides effective grounding for the more abstractly presented claims made earlier about the double marginalization experienced by many feminist poets who were interested in the experimental practices of modernist women and in generating gender-conscious linguistically experimental poetics in their own time. Not comfortable with the dominant modes of feminist poetry or with what they perceived as the male-dominated Language scene, Kathleen Fraser, along with other editors including Susan Gevirtz, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Francis Jaffer, Beverly Dahlen, and Carolyn Burke founded this feminist journal devoted to experimentalist poetry—a journal whose emphasis on brevity, on the writing process, and on interactive exchange, Kinnahan argues, generated "significant reformulations of poetic expression and literary criticism" (30).

Not tightly unified, the rest of the book proceeds essentially as a series of case studies of significant and significantly representative poets. Each figure serves clear functions in Kinnahan's overall argument, though the practices of the poets in different chapters may not be closely linked. Thus, the first poet taken up in chapter 2, Barbara Guest, demonstrates the ways in which gender, feminism, and experimentalism can affect literary stature. A significant figure in the New York School and an important example for younger writers like Fraser, Guest nonetheless suffered decades of extreme critical neglect until feminists of the 1990s helped revive interest in her writing. In this section, as throughout the book, the argument is first laid out theoretically and then demonstrated through detailed examination of a few texts. Guest's reception in the 1960s—seen as determined by a gendered set of aesthetic values—is presented primarily through analysis of one review (by William Dickey in *Kenyon Review*), and her reconstruction of the love lyric and the gendered conventions of reading it is shown through analysis of one poem from that decade, "Belgravia." This method has obvious limits—one has to take on trust that the texts analyzed are representative, and one misses a fuller flavor of the poets' work. But the compensation is that Kinnahan, who is wonderfully alert to ways in which poets play with lyric conventions, provides marvelously insightful close readings.

The second poet discussed in that chapter, Kathleen Fraser, is linked to Guest especially through a shared interest in visual art and its resources for poetry, so that her early work produced in the 1960s serves to demonstrate how page space was being configured to communicate distance, intimacy, presence, and absence in order to refigure the textual self. Kinnahan, who attends to visual experiments a good deal in this study, develops her argument about page space in the era of Olson's insistently masculine practices of field poetics via intriguing analogues with Joan Mitchell's contemporaneous canvases and their resistance to the "masculinized field of the canvas erupting in Pollock's wake" (62). (It is too bad that the book contains no illustrations, a lack also evident in the succeeding chapter's work with woodblock prints.) Contextualized in this way, even poems that are conventional in their arrangement and typography may, through their use of especially large white margins, challenge those conventions. Kinnahan observes, for instance, that the "visual tightness" of "Notes for a Voyeur," a narrow column of text relaying disconnected pieces of a narrative concerning betrayal in love,

> reads as a kind of enforced constraint, a silencing that the poem itself suggests through its gaps in narrative. At the same time, the wide margins variously promise possibility, other versions, other spaces for comprehending the language on the page—the silence can be read as a social dynamic, a formal register of the vulnerability of the speaking "I" within a relationship mapped by an active, visible, male "you." (69)

Even if Kinnahan sometimes risks reading too much into the visible space, her provocative interpretations unfailingly register how much the vitality of a poem emerges through attention to the material text and to the interplay between printed words and white spaces.

The next chapter, a particularly interesting one, continues to consider the visual as a resource for "ordering cultural meaning and organizing frames for readable identities" (79), now in more recent work by two poets of African descent, Erica Hunt (in her collaboration with visual artist Allison Saar) and M. Nourbese Philip, and in the context of the black female body—the material body constructed through historically specific visual orders. As Kinnahan skillfully demonstrates, Hunt's and Saar's *Arcades* and Philip's *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* use the visual to denaturalize race as a specular phenomenon. Because these works, which explore how constructions of the visual infuse systems of power and meaning, respond to quite specific "sociohistorical conceptions, uses, and manifestations of the visual in relation to theorizing, categorizing, and naturalizing race," they encourage "readings of innovative form as socially, politically operative" (83–84). Through her convincing and nuanced readings of visual and verbal elements and their possible social meanings, Kinnahan argues that these artists (and others, such as Mullen) resist the constructed dichotomy that opposes *experimental* and *accessible,* challenging notions of experimentalism as exclusive, elitist, or unreadable. Partly by fostering a multiplicity of voices instead of a univocal subject, they seek to create new forms of accessibility that will encourage communities of readers rather than autonomous individual readers.

Kinnahan's sense of what constitutes experimentalism emerges most clearly in chapter 4, where she makes her most provocative claims on the subject in relation to the 1980s work of the British poet Carol Ann Duffy. In *Lyric Interventions* Kinnahan valuably presents *experimental* as a label that needs to be defined contextually and that should not be narrowly associated with Language writing. Duffy's poems seem less formally innovative than work usually considered experimental, but Kinnahan argues that the more extreme marginalization experienced by female poets in Britain and the less sustained experimentalist tradition there mean that British work must not be examined through an American lens, particularly not by "framing innovation through American Language writing" (133). Readily granting the differences between Duffy's poetics and those of the "alternative" British writers on whom she focuses in the book's final chapter, Kinnahan claims:

> It is the texture of social discourse [economic, nationalist, and socially conservative discourses that position the individual] that these poetries each mine *and* undermine through formal experiments with discourse. Such considerations [including awareness of social and discursive contexts affecting innovative strategies] necessitate a differently nuanced category of the experimental. (134)

Kinnahan's emphasis on discourse and the "situatedness" of poetic conventions is crucial here. Without it, she might seem to be identifying as "experimental" any writing that challenges the establishment—so broadening the category as to render the label virtually meaningless. Her position, however, rests not so much on the views expressed in Duffy's poems—specifically, their critique of the culture of individual enterprise cultivated in the Thatcher years—as on their calling attention to poetic conventions such as voice and self-utterance as functioning within discursive systems with particular histories shaped by specific ideologies. Kinnahan's focus remains on the manipulation of language, both in economic rhetoric and public policy that construct national identity and in Duffy's poetic responses.

Whether or not readers are ready to embrace Kinnahan's inclusive sense of experimentalism, they will find compelling this chapter's linking of lyric voice to public discourse. Kinnahan ties Duffy's approach to lyric subjectivity with notions of the subject promulgated by the conservative government of Margaret Thatcher, who claimed "there is no such thing as society, only individuals and families" (148). Fascinatingly, Kinnahan demonstrates the poems' engagement with the rhetoric that marked the demise of the collectivist, Keynesian economic model dominant since World War II and its replacement by market entrepreneurialism and privatization as well as British nationalism. The self-sufficient individual constructed by the Thatcherite rhetoric of self-reliance and private enterprise was in fact a member of a select group—prosperous, male, heterosexual, white, nonimmigrant. Duffy uses inherited forms like the dramatic monologue to disrupt the dominant rhetorical constructions of that individual or of roles, like those of mother, supporting it.

The closing chapter, also devoted to British writing, returns to work that most would recognize as experimentalist—formally unconventional feminist work informed by poststructuralist and socialist/Marxist theory—though the dominance of male-centered formulations of "experimental" has deprived this poetry of its due attention. Like the first chapter, this one treats poets of two generations, Denise Riley and Wendy Mulford, who have been publishing since the 1970s, and Geraldine Monk, a younger poet better known in the US for her work as a performance artist. Again paralleling earlier discussions of North American dynamics, this chapter examines the double marginalization of feminist experimentalists, now in a British context, and the complex positioning of feminist alternative writing in relation to the lyric *I*. Tracking the interactions between British and American avant gardes, Kinnahan argues convincingly for the need to attend more carefully to gender in mapping those relationships. I would have enjoyed more extensive treatment of Monk's poetry, but the three poems showcased here will no doubt prompt others to provide it. The discussions of Riley and Mulford with which the book concludes emphasize an oscillation between the "re-articulation of identity" (180) and various forms of interrogation, repositioning, and reenvisioning subjectivity, a fitting way to end a work intent on developing an appropriately complex picture of how the lyric subject is being not avoided but refigured by feminist poets uncomfortable within the constraints of conventional lyric.

The Limitations of Authenticity

The Romance of Authenticity:
The Cultural Politics of Regional and Ethnic Literatures
by Jeff Karem
Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004. 247 pages

Abigail Cheever

The proliferation of ethnic literature at the end of the twentieth century may tempt contemporary scholars to imagine that the battle over inclusiveness has been won both inside the academy and in the world of mainstream publishing. With colleges and universities offering courses in literatures previously thought marginal or, worse, just plain bad, and with large publishing houses devoting significant portions of their lists to the writing of previously underrepresented groups, the idea that literature should be left to its white, upper-middle-class practitioners seems quaint at best: *did we ever really think that?* It may be difficult to find a single-author course on any dead white male other than Shakespeare in contemporary English departments, but it is remarkably easy to find courses on the works of Toni Morrison or Virginia Woolf. In the words of Nathan Glazer, truly we are all multicultural now.

Unfortunately it's not that simple. In *The Romance of Authenticity: The Cultural Politics of Regional and Ethnic Literatures,* Jeff Karem challenges the ease with which we congratulate ourselves on our newly broadened curricula. Observing that the "booming interest in 'authentic' ethnic literatures at the end of the twentieth century has a significant precedent in American literary history" (1), Karem places our recent fascination with the cultural production of the nation's ethnicities alongside the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century interest in regional writing. What unites both movements is an enthusiasm for ostensibly authentic cultural material. Although what counts as authentic may have changed dramatically in the years between Sarah Orne Jewett and Leslie Marmon Silko, "the celebration of authenticity itself has remained largely consistent, even in the allegedly post-essentialist framework in which most literary criticism is written today" (4–5). Identifying the "economy of authenticity in publishing and reception and the politics of authenticity in criticism," Karem argues that our devotion to authenticity proves "more a curse than a blessing" (15) for contemporary authors, circumscribing both the production and the reception of ethnic writing. His five case studies—the careers of William Faulkner, Richard Wright, Ernest Gaines, Rolando Hinojosa, and Leslie Marmon Silko—are chosen to illustrate the evolution of authenticity as a category of judgment from the regional to the ethnic, with Richard Wright operating as a crucial transitional figure. Yet the problem is less that our judgment of what counts as authentic might be wrong—that what we think of as "authentically" Southern or African-American or Native American has undergone significant changes over the past century and will probably continue to do so—than that it is inherently limiting. It implies that there are literary forms and styles, literary subjects and interests, that are likewise *inauthentic* and consequently inappropriate for ethnic writers.

The Romance of Authenticity investigates these limitations in action by considering in detail the reception histories of these five authors in order to map the changing "horizon of expectations" regarding cultural authenticity that constricts regional and ethnic writers. For an author like Richard Wright, this means considering not only how his career was shaped by regionalist expectations but also how his work itself influenced what came to be understood as authentic. Wright's early collection of short stories set in his native Mississippi, *Uncle Tom's Children,* was originally celebrated by the *Modern Monthly* as "genuine stuff, rooted in the soil of which it is a part"; Wright was credited by the *San Diego Sun* with "a style as typically musical as the Negro race itself" (67). But Wright was disappointed with himself for having "written a book which even bankers' daughters could read and weep over and feel good about" (qtd. in Karem 69). His second book, *Native Son,* defied readers' expectations of a regional portrait, and while a few reviewers complained that, coming from Chicago, Bigger Thomas is "not really a Negro" (71), most were willing to accept Wright's representation of African-Americans precisely because of Wright's Southern upbringing. The *Amsterdam News,* for example, voiced concern over the "savage-ape like idea of the Negro" implied by Wright's characterization but noted that since "Mr. Wright was born in the South" he might have "a more fundamental knowledge of the 'Negro type'" (73). In his version of how Richard Wright's manuscript *American Hunger* became the memoir *Black Boy,* Karem disputes the conventional scholarly account that the manuscript was thought either too long or too anticommunist for its audience. He argues instead that the second half of the manuscript, Wright's account of his life in Chicago, was left off at the request of Book-of-the-Month-Club judges (notably Henry Seidel Canby and Dorothy Canfield Fisher) who wanted to position the autobiography as a regionalist story of African-American life in the deep South. The revisions had the added benefit of blunting Wright's scathing criticism of specifically Northern racism, allowing readers the luxury of imagining that racial oppression was a comfortingly regional as opposed to national phenomenon. The correspondence between Wright and Fisher over the ending supports this conclusion; Fisher, wanting Wright to further differentiate between the "violent brutality" of Southern racism and the "hypocrisy" of Northern racism, asked if Wright couldn't provide "one word of recognition" for American aspirations to justice, since "from what other source than the basic tradition of our country could the soul of an American have been filled with that 'hazy notion' that life could be lived with dignity?" (82). The result, Karem argues, is that "Wright's regional portraits were put to national use by providing a cultural critique that could be contained regionally, thus allowing the nation's broader self-image to stay intact" (92).

Yet too close a focus on reception risks telling us more about the biases of a given reviewer or historical moment than about the texts as such, a hazard that Karem most successfully avoids in his discussion of Rolando Hinojosa's Belken County fiction. Hinojosa has virtually no reception history for Karem to consider—only two of his 15 works of fiction have been reviewed by a nationally distributed paper—a fact that Karem partially attributes to his unsuitability as an ethnic spokesperson. Where the careers of Sandra Cisneros, the "the impassioned bard of the Mexican border" (128), or Leslie Marmon Silko suggest their gradual acceptance of the role of culturally representative author, Hinojosa's work continually resists the notion that any one person could adequately embody an entire culture. Implementing an aesthetic that is "representational but not representative" (128), Hinojosa's fiction adopts a multiplicity of voices from both the Anglo and *mexicano* communities and eschews narrative unity in favor of preserving "a sense of alterity—that border culture is not wholly intelligible—not only to outsiders but also to borderers themselves" (129). This commitment to cultural and narrative plurality violates the tradition of social realism that has dominated Latino literature since the 1960s and disrupts contemporary expectations of a "strict binary of Anglo oppressor and *mexicano* subaltern" (129). Instead, Hinojosa's work destabilizes such identity categories by exposing the hybridity of border life, where the traditional markers of linguistic competence and cultural practice cannot accurately predict ethnic backgrounds. The result, Karem argues, "suggests the possibility of participating in diverse identities by changing one's practices or self-narration" (145) and supports a model of identity that is less essential than strategic: "the performing of an identity that suits a particular end" (146).

Karem's case studies document well the pervasive belief that "some forms of writing, identity, and cultural practice are 'truer' to one's group than others" (205), and the cumulative effect of his evidence undermines the comfortable conviction that the battle against restrictive accounts of identity has been won on contemporary college campuses. In endorsing a multiethnic approach to literary scholarship, we may well have inadvertently exchanged one set of limitations for another. Ultimately, *The Romance of Authenticity* requests that both mainstream and academic critics be more self-conscious about the type of representative work that is asked of authors and their texts, suggesting that one possible solution lies in considering how marginal texts "complicate rather than affirm assumptions about authenticity, representation, and literature" (208). Where Karem's study does not go, however, is to the larger question surrounding the usefulness of the ethnic categorization of literature when those categories cannot be said to have any content beyond the cultural affiliations of their authors. If, as Karem's study argues, the writing within the category of African-American literature (or Latino or Native American literature) is just as diverse as the writing outside it, what work are such categories performing? Of course, this is a complaint that might well be addressed against any literary categorization: are the literatures of the

United States and England different enough to warrant their separation? Such groupings—be they ethnic, national, or gendered—undoubtedly have their uses. The very success of Karem's project makes that investigation seem all the more necessary for his analysis.

The "Scanty Plot": Orwell, Pynchon, and the Poetics of Paranoia

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> In truth the prison, into which we doom
> Ourselves, no prison is; and hence for me,
> In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
> Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground.
>
> —Wordsworth (199)

Not least among the prescient aspects of George Orwell's *1984* is its articulation of a paranoia that is at once dismal and thrilling. If today paranoia's distinctive sensibility—its blend of grandiosity and abjection—has become a commonplace of the modern novel, with writers from Pynchon to DeLillo to Amis riffing on the suspicion that the world might be a setup, Orwell's version lays the groundwork for their sense of paranoia's possibilities. In this essay, I treat the paranoia of *1984* as more than just a topical thematics that reacts to the political conditions of Orwell's time; I argue that the novel also responds to the condition of the literature of his time. By looking at *1984* and then, briefly, Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* as counterpoint, I pose Orwell's paranoid poetics as an effort to mediate between competing literary discourses and their attendant models of subjectivity.

That Orwell explicitly intended *1984* to address topical political realities has been well documented.[1] In a letter to Francis A. Henson in June 1949, commenting on the germ of the novel, he wrote: "totalitarian ideas have taken root in the minds of intellectuals everywhere, and I have tried to draw these ideas out to their logical consequences" (Howe 287). Following along these lines, John Atkins, in an early response to *1984*, claimed that the world of *1984* is "not imagination at all but a painstaking pursuit of existing tendencies to what appear logical conclusions" (252). Similarly, Irving Howe, a champion of the work, wrote that the "last thing Orwell cared about, the last thing he should have cared about when he wrote *1984* is literature" (322).[2] Such statements as these lay the groundwork for reading *1984* in terms of its clear-sightedness, its evocation of "history as nightmare" (the title of Howe's article), rather than in terms of the work's literary qualities.

But it is not only Orwell's visceral revulsion at totalitarian politics that shapes this critical response: it is also *1984's* rejection of novelistic conventions. For example, while Howe calls 1984 a "remarkable" book (321), he also suggests that it does not meet the requirements of the novel as genre:

> It is not, I suppose, really a novel, or at least it does not satisfy those expectations we have come to have with regard to the novel—expectations that are mainly the heritage of nineteenth century romanticism with its stress upon individual consciousness, psychological analysis and the study of intimate relations. (321)

Howe continues: "Orwell has imagined a world in which the self, whatever subterranean existence it might manage to eke out, is no longer a significant value, not even a value to be violated" (322). Here he gestures toward a possibility for reading *1984* within, rather than outside of, the tradition: Orwell's "violation" of the notion of self is not simply a violation of an a priori assumption about the nature of the human; it is the violation of the self as literary category, as a quantity derived through literature and within the dynamic process of narrative development. In this sense, if *1984* is only dubiously literature instead of politics, Orwell at the very least cares enough to speak to literature and the novel tradition. What then is the relationship between *1984* and literature, and, by extension, its literary period?

We might begin by considering the climax of the novel. The climax appears to be the scene in Room 101, where Winston is introduced to his greatest fear, the rats. "Do it to Julia!" he cries (190), proving that love is no match for torture, and that the perfected totalitarian state is capable of erasing the last vestige of humanity. But we might offer a different climactic scene. Immediately before his capture, Winston stands in front of a picture on the wall of his hideaway. "We are the dead," he says. He is shocked when "You are the dead" is repeated back to him, the voice coming from behind the picture (147). The scene continues:

> "Now they can see us," said Julia.
> "Now we can see you," said the voice. . . .
> "The house is surrounded," said Winston.
> "The house is surrounded," said the voice. (148)

Winston still has yet to be turned inside out and reconstituted as an empty shell, a good citizen of Oceania. But while the annihilation of Winston the character has yet to come, here we see the calculated annihilation of Orwell's novel. A text that once included multiple voices contending with one another to define themselves and the fictive real collapses into monologicity. The rest of the novel will be taken up with an interrogation in which one party already knows the answers, and in which the ultimate confession is a fait accompli. As Howe suggests, it is the end of character as a category in possession of agency, interiority, *essence*—in short, in possession of itself. But Winston's end is not the starting point of the novel, it is the conclusion. If Winston begins as a familiar character—the hero of a quest romance—he ends as quite another: an environmental fixture. Winston's walls cannot stand in the face of O'Brien's assault on behalf of Big Brother and the Party. "We shall squeeze you empty, and then we shall fill you with ourselves," O'Brien says (170). With this "violation" Orwell's novel stages an anxious, reflexive encounter not just with the politics of the day but also with specifically literary models of representing the subject.

As the voice in the picture mirrors back to Winston his own words, it is both a moment of supreme romantic transcendence and of intense paranoia, the action within the fictive real reproducing a logic of complete adequation between inside and outside worlds. It is the pathetic fallacy made literal—Winston's thoughts really do appear in the world, are indistinguishable from it. The hallmarks of paranoia—its insistence on reading into a random, indifferent world a motivated, coherent narrative; its claim of grandiosity for the object of aggression; its reduction of the world to a stable binary in which all signs take their meaning through their relation to the paranoid—are quite explicitly rendered as the basis of the novel's "plot." Paranoia becomes, in effect, the poetic principle governing *1984*.[3]

If *1984* exists at the intersection of politics and psychology, it also registers a crisis of signification occasioned by the modernism of the 1920s and 30s. It is the paranoid poetics of the novel that make this crisis of signification visible—a poetics that simultaneously participates in and resists what we have come to call modernism, particularly modernism's alteration of the terms by which we understand character and plot.[4] This is not to say that Orwell's aim was to critique modernism, or that he passed ill judgment on the experimentation of writers like Joyce and Eliot; indeed, he strongly endorsed their literary achievements.[5] Rather, it is to argue that Orwell the novelist deploys two separate modes of representation—romantic and modernist—in *1984,* and that the clash between them conditions and is conditioned by the paranoia of the novel.

In recent years there have been numerous studies of paranoia and literature that move beyond the sense of paranoia as theme and look instead to its operations within the realm of narrative. David Trotter's recent work on paranoia and modernism is one example. Focusing on Lawrence, Lewis, Conrad, and Ford, Trotter sees a link between paranoia and modernism emerging from the rise of professionalism at the end of the nineteenth century. Professionalism's emphasis on ordering the mess of details that constitute the world placed writers' "professional identities under extreme pressure" (7). For the writers Trotter addresses, paranoia, with its "will to abstraction" (5) and its investment in hidden knowledge, becomes a means of reclaiming value from the mimetic economies that govern expertise. What Trotter calls the paranoid modernism of these writers becomes an anxious means of responding to the new commercial paradigm governing the cultural production of value.[6]

In postmodern formulations, articulated by recent critics like Patrick O'Donnell and Timothy Melley, paranoia also acts as a response to a threat to identity.[7] Here, however, the threat has expanded from the discourse of professionalism to a broad-based cultural pathology. Where Trotter links the sense of paranoia as collective pathology to the individual expressions of paranoia in the authors he discusses, O'Donnell and Melley focus on paranoia as a culturally produced and authorized narrative technology. For O'Donnell it is a "narrative work or operation that articulates the 'individual's' relation to the symbolic order" (14), while for Melley it is a "complex and self-defeating [attempt] to preserve a familiar concept of subjectivity" (23). It is their sense of paranoia as a means of narrating subjectivity that I want to build on here, in order to explore how the contest over subjectivity plays out in Orwell's aesthetic identity.

Specifically, Orwell uses paranoia to bridge competing romantic and modernist models of the subject. He exaggerates both romanticism's sense of the expansive subject and modernism's sense of the subject suspended within a complex web of signs.[8] The paranoia of the novel is a symptom of the contact zone where the romantic subject who would have signs disappear into immanence to reveal the "true subject" is stranded in a modernist world made up of scattered textual fragments, where immanence will come not in the disappearance of signs but in their full "capture" of the subject. Orwell pins the displaced romantic subject in text, effecting both repair and stabilization.[9] What is beyond textuality is reduced to an erratum: "You are a flaw in the pattern, Winston. You are a stain that must be wiped out" (169), O'Brien says. "We make the brain perfect before we blow it out." Orwell's paranoid portrayal both indulges such an aesthetic and evokes horror at the loss of those elements that might escape the net of legibility.

Peter Knight, in his discussion of the connectedness of seemingly random events in DeLillo's *Underworld,* makes a suggestive observation with regard to paranoia's capacity for connecting events. He notes that "taken individually, many of these connections are perhaps no more than the thematic construction of a well-composed work of fiction" (829) and draws attention to the fact that novels already privilege a kind of "connectedness" in reading. This association with paranoia is not just metaphorical. In fact, the cognitive malfunction that lies at the heart of paranoia is located in the perception of connectedness, in this most basic act of "fiction." In other words, paranoia is the act of reading the world as if it were a book. And moreover, as if it were a *bad* book: the paranoid, insisting on an excessive correspondence between signs and things, refuses the looser signification of the metaphor for unambiguous certainty.[10] In this sense, paranoid logic is instrumental rather than metaphorical, mathematical rather than poetic. The paranoid premise establishes a coherent framework for organizing the multiplication of manifestations. It is a kind of excessive formalization, a metastatic organization of material that points toward a single hidden conclusion, the threat to autonomy.[11]

Just as the struggle for autonomy becomes a structuring principle of the paranoid's mental organization, the paranoid text both thematizes the threat to autonomy and enacts it at the formal level. Three elements in particular structure this threat within the "paranoid style": paranoia's intensity of investment in its story; paranoid identification (projective identification); and the persistence of the paranoid premise. With regard to the first, at the simplest level we notice paranoia when an "objective" view of events is overwhelmed by the interpretive gestures of the teller. With regard to the second, paranoid identification establishes equivalency between the paranoid and his persecutor. A paranoid structure assays reconstruction of the ego on an exaggerated, delusional scale, the paranoid identifying himself with the more grandiose object of both his terror and his love.[12] With regard to the third, paranoid logic relies on its initial premise of persecution in order to establish its claims. Once such a conclusion is presumed, the events take on significance in relation to each other in what appears to be a causal sequence by virtue of their capacity to prove this prior conclusion. Taken together and singly, these operations are all predicated on asserting both autonomy and authority over the text. To be paranoid is to be the last and best reader of the text, the one for whom the text is written. When the paranoid narrative structure is absorbed into the text, characters within the fictive real are invited to recognize the world they inhabit as constructed within the protocols of textuality.

Although, as Knight's comment suggests, each of the above operations has an analogue in familiar behaviors of reading—we attribute motive to authors; we identify with characters; we partake of the page-bound intelligibility of fictive worlds (and "lose" ourselves in them)—paranoia is distinct in the degree of its investment in this role. What distinguishes paranoia from a reasonable suspiciousness is ultimately not whether the threat is true, but the kind of gratification the paranoid takes in the threat. Though the paranoid is an active reader, he or she also has an investment in being the passive object of reading. The projective quality of paranoia has a tendency to reverse the readerly gaze. Imagine the traveler who stands on a hill and gazes out at the utopian, legible city—paranoia reverses the vector of agency so that the paranoid stands in the middle while the world gazes back.[13] Autonomy is asserted through the adoption of two complementary grandiose positions: the paranoid occupies a privileged relationship to the text of the world both as the lone reader of signs and as the object implicated in or by them.

Just as the paranoid shuttles back and forth between the positions of the reader and the read, the paranoid narrative shuttles between abjection and grandiosity for its protagonists. This simultaneous decentering and valorization of subjectivity within the confines of a systematic textuality echoes the modernist project. The apocalyptic sense that Frank Kermode identifies as part of the modern sensibility dovetails in paranoia with what he refers to as the "formal desperation" of the Joyce/Proust/Kafka/Musil brand of modernism (10). Modernism shifts the balance of inflection between the word and the world in favor of the word, substituting the dream of a formally coherent text for the expectation of coherent character, and thus opens the door to the enforced unities of paranoid reading.

As modernism morphs into postmodernism, we see an even more explicit portrayal of form and an even greater emphasis on the textual nature of subjectivity.[14] Knight argues that in a world where "everything is connected but nothing adds up" (823), more, not less paranoia is required. Many critics, including the ones noted above, have explored how contemporary writers like Pynchon, Kathy Acker, Martin Amis, and Don DeLillo exploit paranoia as a pervasive cultural theme within what O'Donnell calls the "complicitous relation between postmodernity and paranoia" (vii). O'Donnell argues that texts by writers like Pynchon and Acker "chart the peregrinations of fluid, postmodern identities operating within increasingly complex and encroaching disciplinary matrices" (23). In other words, if modernism requires paranoid reading to make sense of the world text, postmodernism poses paranoia no longer as a buttress against fragmentation but as its complement, as a defense against the enforced hierarchies of modernist reading.[15]

Within this account of paranoia's rise, Orwell's text is a harbinger of things to come. In what follows I will trace some of the forms and figures that shape the "familiar concept of subjectivity" that Orwell inherits and show how paranoia registers moments of change within it. I will also suggest some of the ways in which postmodern paranoia is distinct from modernist and romantic versions.

§

While Orwell shared for much of his career a historical stage with various incarnations of the modernist movement, his relationship to modernism as an aesthetic is contentious. Most striking is his sense of the group of writers now classed under the rubric of "modernism"—Joyce, Eliot, Pound, Lawrence, etc.—as having neglected a historical sense of purpose in their writing. In "Inside the Whale" he writes of them: "Our eyes are directed to Rome, to Byzantium, to Montparnasse, to Mexico, to the Etruscans, the subconscious, to the solar plexus—to everywhere except the places where things are actually happening" (*Collected Essays* 1: 508). Despite the approval of the technical innovation and experimentation of Joyce and Eliot that he expresses elsewhere, he goes on to critique the culture of arid formalist excess in which technical experimentation takes precedence:

> In "cultured circles," art-for-art's-saking extended practically to a worship of the meaningless. Literature was supposed to consist solely in the manipulation of words. To judge a book by its subject-matter was the unforgivable sin, and even to be aware of its subject matter was looked on as a lapse of taste.

The generation that follows—"Auden, Spender & Co."—reintegrates politics in his view, but moves "no nearer the masses" by blindly adhering to "the ill-defined thing called Communism" (1: 512). In this generation the "typical literary man ceases to be a cultured expatriate with a leaning towards the church and becomes an eager-minded schoolboy with a leaning towards Communism" (1: 510). Both groups are insulated from direct encounter with the realities of political life. Even Henry Miller, whom Orwell consistently and lavishly praised, is guilty of writing from "inside the whale," Orwell's phrase for the "final, unsurpassable stage of irresponsibility" (1: 521) that comes with giving up on the world.

While on the one hand Orwell's concern is ardently political, on the other it cuts to the heart of the aesthetic issue that courses through modernism, the relation between language, the self, and the world. In Orwell's account, following the 1920s

> the pendulum swung away from the notion that art is merely technique, but it swung a very long distance, to the point of asserting that a book can only be "good" if it is founded on a "true" vision of life. (*Collected Essays* 1: 522)

For Orwell, this "true vision" is equally dangerous, open to abuse by those who would claim to possess it. He opposes the "true vision" to the merely technical vision, requiring that the "true vision" resist its own orthodoxies if literature is to reclaim its relevance. Orwell sees little hope. If Miller is the "only imaginative prose writer of the slightest value who has appeared among English-speaking races for some years past," he is also "a demonstration of the impossibility of any major literature until the world has shaken itself into a new shape" (1: 527). In the meantime, writers are condemned to submit to the "world-process" as it is, to "simply accept it, endure it, record it" (1: 526). If language is to be recovered, it will be via individual truths that address the collective reality; but, in keeping with Orwell's fierce defense of the individual, such truths must necessarily be lonely truths, derived from singular perceptions, if they are to be valid.

Critics such as Keith Alldritt go so far as to find the symbolism, allusiveness, and historical concern of *1984* consistent with the modernist project. At the same time, Alldritt reads Orwell as a failed symbolist, returning to "allegorical fable and utopia . . . forms that were more resistant to the strong influences of Joyce, Proust, and D. H. Lawrence" (4). He argues that this struggle is allegorized in *1984,* the novel a "projection and a criticism of the tendencies of the specifically literary orthodoxy of the time," with O'Brien a "caricature of certain symbolist attitudes" (158–59).[16] Meanwhile, if Orwell is "interested less in temperament than milieu" (21), he is also linked with the naturalist tradition of Gissing and Wells, the same tradition that Virginia Woolf attacks in her modernist manifesto "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown."[17] If, like Wells, Orwell's interest lies as much with setting as with character, like Eliot he also sees a world constructed by language.

This aesthetic conundrum becomes a source of *1984'*s own version of passivity. Winston is caught between the degenerate popular literature that Orwell so despises, embodied in the mechanical popular culture produced by the Party, and an aesthetic of pure language that has no connection to the world, embodied in the Inner Party's language games. The individual subject for Orwell is already dangerously tied up in signifying systems that threaten to overwhelm agency. Through his essays, memoirs, and other novels we see Orwell struggling to define a notion of the subject that escapes from the vagaries of discourse. In his famous essay "Politics and the English Language," Orwell conceives of debased language as that which is imposed from "outside" rather than being generated from "inside" the subject's own perceptions. Echoing Daniel Paul Schreber, who writes of "miracled birds" that repeat "'meaningless phrases that they have learnt by heart' and that have been 'crammed into them'" (qtd. in Freud, *Three Case Histories* 111), Orwell writes: "[Ready-made phrases] will construct your sentences for you—even think your thoughts for you, to a certain extent—and at need they will perform the important service of partially concealing your meaning even from yourself" (Howe 258). The answer, he writes, is "to let the meaning choose the word, and not the other way around" (255).[18] His commitment here is to the struggle against the loss of authority over language. Is authority over the real to reside in the individual's ability to grasp "facts," or in the language itself?[19] Language that has migrated from speakers to "speakers"—the loudspeakers that blare out propaganda in *1984*—cannot guarantee individual presence.

How, then, does Orwell's paranoia mediate between these conflicting aesthetic models? While Orwell's insistence on signs that can point the way to the world ("two plus two makes four") is an attitude that resists certain of modernism's presuppositions about language, his assertion of character as a category that is open to the protocols of reading, that exists as if in a book, associates his text also with the very modernism he seems to strain against. It is a deep strain of latent romanticism that connects these positions. By imagining a subject who is in possession of—or who ought to be in possession of—an "impregnable" heart, an essential connection to a sublime that transcends mere language, Orwell reproduces romanticism's terms of subjectivity within the protocols of a modernist world. It is this embattled romanticism that surfaces in Orwell's text in the form of paranoia.

I want to turn now to several characteristic examples that suggest one version of the romantic relationship to textuality. Wordsworth's "Nuns fret not at their narrow convent room" closes with an image of agreeable incarceration in poetic language:

> In truth the prison, into which we doom
> Ourselves, no prison is; and hence for me,
> In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
> Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground.

Ironizing the "scantiness" of the sonnet form, Wordsworth suggests that, far from being a prison, it is, like a convent room, a relief from the crowded outside world. Wordsworth is finally alone with his text. The "we" of the first line of the stanza becomes "me" in the second line; reading and writing are, finally, solitary acts. The scantiness of the "plot" occurs in several registers: graphically, in the sonnet's plotting out of the space on the page; expressively, in the sense that the sonnet limits itself to a rendition of one thought, emotion, or feeling; and finally socially, in the reader's opting out of the world of things for the world of signs. Wordsworth claims the privilege of entering alone into the scanty plot; the paranoid is condemned to it.

Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* offers a different version of the romantic relation between solitude and signs. In her novel, a plague wipes out all of humanity, leaving Verney, the last man, in an ecstasy of singularity:

> I shall witness all the variety of appearance, that the elements can assume—I shall read fair augury in the rainbow—menace in the cloud—some lesson or record dear to my heart in everything. Thus around the shores of deserted earth, while the sun is high, and the moon waxes or wanes, angels, the spirits of the dead, and the ever-open eye of the Supreme, will behold the tiny bark freighted with Verney—the LAST MAN. (342)

Verney has become the one person in the world who can read the signs—literally the last man. If Wordsworth looks around his cell and sees the writing on the wall, Verney sees the writing on the world. But both Wordsworth and Shelley provide a subject who stands alone at the center of a network of signs, in the privileged position of solitary reader. Wordsworth's and Shelley's formulations suggest the romanticism inherent in paranoia (and vice versa). To be alone with a text is the essence of the paranoid structure of reading, which presumes a special relationship between reader and signs. In Orwell, romantic solitude is exchanged for paranoid singularity, preserving the sense that the text can be *for* a chosen reader.

This romantic conception survives into the next century. But what happens when the signs no longer point to the self? Perched on the verge of modernity, we see Thomas Hardy adopting this problematic as theme. In "Hap," Hardy expresses anxiety about the condition of reference, linking it to the desire to find intentionality in the signs:

> If but some vengeful god would call to me
> From up the sky and laugh: "Thou suffering thing,
> Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
> That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!"
>
> Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
> Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
> Half-eased in that a powerfuller than I
> Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

> But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain
> And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
> —Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain
> and dicing Time for gladness casts a moan . . .
> These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
> Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain. (*Norton* 44)

If there were only intention, Hardy seems to say, joy would blossom in the knowing that one has been singled out, however unjustly, for a bad ending. Indeed, Hardy returns again and again to a notion of fate's lack of personal interest as the wellspring of tragedy. The gods are not vengeful, but randomly, coldly indifferent—and thus, for Hardy's narrator, sorrow becomes unbearable. Hardy is not paranoid in "Hap"; paranoia is a subjunctive promise of relief, an outlook that might somehow redeem suffering by making it his own. Orwell recapitulates this anxiety about intention and the place of the subject in *1984*. Winston asks Julia if she remembers

> "that thrush that sang to us, that first day, at the edge of the wood?"
>
> "He wasn't singing to us," said Julia. "He was singing to please himself." (147)

Like Hardy's darkling thrush, the bird sings of something Winston and Julia cannot see, that is indifferent to their existence.[20]

The crisis Hardy points to is not strictly a historical one. It also invokes the exhaustion of a romantic literary rhetoric in the face of its own belatedness. Perry Meisel argues that the modernist novel in turn is a form of materialized memory, an effort to retroactively produce a ground that will authorize the subject. This "paradox of belatedness" (5) infuses both modernism and romanticism. According to Meisel, both romanticism and modernism enact a "retroactive production of lost primacy by means of evidence belatedly gathered to signify the presence of its absence" (229). This formulation draws attention to the important connection between these two modes, though there is also a substantive difference in exactly how the "presence of absence" is signified. In the romantic text, it appears through a shift in perception; in modernism through a shift in the signifying status of the text itself, which relocates the sublime not in the world but in the textual object.

1984 signals a new phase in the battle for romantic subjectivity. Orwell provides a vision of the romantic character—Verney, the last man—fallen into a modernist landscape where individual presence is disallowed. But instead of simply lamenting the demise of the subject, Orwell uses paranoia to return the subject to the center of the signifying system. Unable to ignore the crisis to which Hardy is responding, he indulges romanticism's fantasies of reference, its intensity of affect, and its version of the *solus ipse,* the solitary self, that seeks to reach harmony with nature's grand design.[21] In a modernist world of fragmentation, such figures curdle into paranoia.

The sense of compromised interior space is critical to the paranoid conception of the subject as a thing under siege.[22] It is a subject that recognizes itself only through its contact with an outside force that would eradicate it, whose borders become visible in the outline cast by the surrounding army of threats. Thus, even memory, which would seem to be the impregnable core, the means by which the subject recognizes itself, is shown in *1984* to be under the control of the state. If the production of memory is a wellspring of both modernism and romanticism, in *1984* we see a failure to produce such a grounding memory, either through recollecting an individual past or defining a textual present that can be controlled by the individual. The reduction of memory to an alterable text destabilizes both character and setting. In *1984,* the public past has been successfully overwritten by the authorities, as in the case of Jones, Aaronson, and Rutherford. The old man in the bar possesses nothing but a "rubbish heap of details" (62) that are of no use to Winston. Though he seeks to embrace the past through the antiques in the junk shop, through his encounter with the old man in the bar, or through historical records, they suggest only the extent to which the past has been effectively colonized.

Neither can Winston's private history withstand the Party's assault on memory. Although Winston manages to remember fragments of his personal history in dreams, such as the "dark, close-smelling room" (107) where he last saw his mother and heard his sister's "feeble wail" (109) as he fled with the stolen chocolate, even these will be subject to seizure. "You suffer from a defective memory" (163), O'Brien tells him in the interrogation scene; these private memories will be replaced by love for Big Brother. Winston has already understoon the implications of this effacement, thinking:

> when memory failed and written records were falsified—when that happened, the claim of the Party to have improved human life had got to be accepted, because there did not exist, and could never again exist, any standard against which it could be measured. (63)

Paranoia in Orwell's formulation provides an answer to this destabilization. Its rigid architectonics of narrative underdetermine character, stabilizing it: a multiplicity of signs is reduced to a paucity of meaning; the paranoid is frozen in someone else's text. The paranoid text invokes not an extra-textual sublime but a manifestation, the hard sheen of surfaces. Rather than developing character toward a horizon of the real, the paranoid text develops character toward the horizon of textuality; but, unlike modernism in Meisel's formulation, the individual's authority over the resulting textual object consists only in being named by it.

This emphasis on textuality makes it no accident that the "plot" of *1984* is punctuated by three texts: Winston's diary, Goldstein's manual, and finally Winston himself, as intelligible text to be read by the state apparatus (the appendix on the principles of Newspeak might count as a fourth, though it falls outside the "plot" of Winston's demise). The secret diary the novel begins with is Winston's effort to resuscitate a notion of the subject as distinct from environment. But later, Winston and his diary are both read by the thought police, suggesting that there can be no private voice that is not subject to external authority. Winston finds himself unconsciously scrawling "DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER" (14) over and over again in the margins of his diary early in the novel, but by the end he is absently writing "2+2=5" (192) in the dust on the table of the Chestnut Tree. This shift indicates the collapse of a self capable of opposing itself to the external reality or of generating thoughts that escape the Party's efforts to make language meaningless and wholly independent of the individual. "There was no idea that he had ever had, or could have, that O'Brien had not long ago known, examined, rejected" (170).

The novel progresses toward this undoing of agency through a series of revelations about its language. Though we encounter various competing discourses throughout the novel, from manuals to interior thought to dialogue, newspapers, and popular songs, they all lead to the same place within the text, having been fabricated and deployed by the Party. The versificator produces popular songs for the proles, history is written and rewritten according to Party dictates, and Goldstein's subversive manual is a trap produced by O'Brien and other members of the Party. Even random bits of doggerel cannot escape incorporation into the design. Winston cannot remember the rest of the shopkeeper Charrington's rhyme that begins "Orange and lemons say the bells of St. Clement's;" finally, it is O'Brien, the representative of the Party, who supplies the missing lines.

The individual role in language is conspicuously absent. "No book is produced individually," according to O'Brien (174); the implication here is not that the language has been opened up to multiple speakers who offer their own variations and consequently construct a communal tongue, but that language has been divorced from lived experience. When the propaganda machines tout increases in shoe production or announce that the army is winning the war against Eurasia, singular perceptions become meaningless because there is nothing other than language on which to ground them. "Reality is not external," O'Brien says (165); but he also goes on to say that reality exists "[n]ot in the individual mind, which can make mistakes, and in any case soon perishes; [it exists] only in the mind of the Party, which is collective and immortal" (165).[23]

Newspeak's play with language—though constricted and joyless—is the means by which the real is to be made inaccessible. It complements doublethink, which is

> the telling of deliberate lies while genuinely believing them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just so long as it is needed, to deny the existence of objective reality and all the while to take account of the reality which one denies. (143)

What is described here is a poetics of signification that is both complete in itself and, paradoxically, independent of any objective signified, except insofar as the language implies a doublethinking speaker. Doublethink erases all claims to an extralinguistic real.

This is sadism directed at language. In fact, the sadistic, paranoid element of *1984*'s world is directed emphatically at *literary* language. The literature of the past is being translated into Newspeak; Syme explains to Winston, "Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron—they'll exist only in Newspeak versions, not merely changed into something different, but actually changed into something contradictory of what they used to be"

(37). O'Brien allows metaphor to expire in explaining the logic of the world: "The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power. Now do you begin to understand me?" (175). This tautology—what Alok Rai calls a "vacuous circularity" (161)—devastates not only any attempt to answer but also the very notion of a literary language that progresses toward elusive (or allusive) objects. Paranoia, certain of what signs mean, cannot sustain itself in the face of a language that refuses to hold still. Such slippage as is found in poetry—multiple contexts for a single word, for example—disrupts at the microscopic level the structure out of which the paranoid plot is constructed and sustained, requiring an even more powerful paranoid investment to fend off meanings that fall outside the boundaries of the "scanty plot."[24] In *1984,* words become like mirrors, reflecting back only their own fixed images.

The paranoia of *1984* thus becomes as much wish as nightmare. It is a "last man" fantasy, a wish for a privileged relationship to signs. In this sense, Winston Smith is a romantic, filled with nostalgia and a sense of his own specialness, searching for signs that will affirm his existence, desiring to leave civilization behind for the pastoral of the "golden country." But there is no more nature; there is only an artificial language that has preempted the real with a construction of the Party. Winston writes in his diary: "Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two makes four. If that is granted, all else follows" (55). It is the same equation that Dostoevsky's Underground Man rails against as tyrannical ("This twice two image stands there, hands in pockets, in the middle of the road, and spits in your direction" [117]), but Dostoevsky rejects it because it denies the irrational, romantic soul of man.[25] For Orwell, the formula is salvation, the irrefutable indicator of an objective real that can be apprehended and rendered by the individual.

Orwell seemed to have been rehearsing *1984* his entire career as a novelist. Though the earlier novels lay the groundwork for *1984* without ever passing into the kind of explicit paranoid structuration that infuses the later novel, paranoia is nonetheless an ever-present possibility. In *Coming Up for Air,* for example, Orwell also tells the story of a man who searches for his golden past. George Bowling wins the lottery and decides to take a trip to visit his childhood home. Bowling's shame at this urge to go back to the site of childhood is exaggerated into a paranoid farce:

> What was more, I actually had a feeling they were after me already. The whole lot of them! All the people who couldn't understand why a middle-aged man with false teeth should sneak away for a quiet week in the place where he spent his boyhood. And all the mean-minded bastards who *could* understand only too well, and who'd raise heaven and earth to prevent it. They were all on my track. It was as if a huge army were streaming up the road behind me. I seemed to see them in my mind's eye. Hilda was in front, of course, with the kids tagging after her, and Mrs. Wheeler driving her forward with a grim, vindictive expression, and Miss Minns rushing along in the rear, with her pince-nez slipping down and a look of distress on her face, like the hen that gets left behind when the others have got hold of the bacon rind. And Sir Herbert Crum and the higher-ups of the Flying Salamander in their Rolls-Royces and Hispano-Suizas. And all the chaps at the office, and all the poor down-trodden pen-pushers from Ellesmere Road and from all other such roads, some of them wheeling prams and mowing-machines and concrete garden-rollers, some of them chugging along in little Austin Sevens. And all the soul-savers and Nosey Parkers, the people whom you've never seen but rule your destiny all the same, the Home Secretary, Scotland Yard, the Temperance League, the Bank of England, Lord Beaverbrook, Hitler and Stalin on a tandem bicycle, the bench of Bishops, Mussolini, the Pope—they were all after me. I could almost hear them shouting:
>
> "There's a chap who thinks he's going to escape! There's a chap who says he won't be streamlined. He's going back to Lower Binfield! After him! Stop him!" (205–06)[26]

Here, as in *1984,* the desire to return to the past is thwarted by a ubiquitous network of authorities and informants. In fact, Bowling will find that the fishing holes and houses he remembers have already been fouled by the same type of industrial middle-class development he is escaping.

Coming Up for Air also provides us with an earlier version of Big Brother. Bowling speaks sarcastically of the "god" of the Hesperides Estates, the subsidized, middle-class housing project where he now lives, as a "queer sort of god . . . bisexual . . . [t]he top half would be a managing director and the bottom half would be a wife in the family way" (13). In *1984,* the order is reversed. Instead of seeking to escape from the tyranny of a hermaphroditic god, Winston embraces it.

Perhaps most significantly, in *Coming Up for Air* Orwell provides an emblem of the collapse of boundaries between the private and public worlds that becomes realized on a grander scale in *1984.* Returning home, Bowling witnesses the aftermath of a bomb's explosion in Lower Binfield. The explosion has ripped the wall off a house "as neatly as if someone had done it with a knife" (264). The guts of the house are exposed to Bowling's view: "and what was extraordinary was that in the upstairs rooms nothing had been touched. It was just like looking into a doll's house" (264). In *1984* this exposure is applied to character: "They could lay bare in the utmost detail everything that you had done or said or thought; but the inner heart, whose workings were mysterious even to yourself, remained impregnable" (111).

In *1984* Orwell fully pulls down the wall of the house and of the subject to reveal, in a perverse switch on the family romance, the subject's true home in the law. *1984* closes with Winston's successful return to the bosom of "family." The regressive rapprochement of the novel unpacks Freud's logic of paranoia, "I love him, I hate him, he hates me" (*Three Case Histories* 139–40).[27] It moves from Winston's feeling that he is the object of hostile surveillance and control to an active struggle against Big Brother and finally to an embrace: "He gazed up at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache. O Cruel, needless misunderstanding. O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast" (197).[28] The "enormous face" signals that the sight line belongs to the suckling infant, but Big Brother is also a lover ("He loved Big Brother" [197]), a brother ("the Brotherhood"), and the father whose law Winston embraces. Fulfilling Schreber's fantasy of identification with God, Winston evacuates himself in order to merge with the object of his fear. (In fact, the evacuation of Winston's bowels and bile is a recurring motif throughout.) Here, the God Winston enters is the law, an empty sign, no more than a face on the telescreen. The law of the father stands always "before" the paranoid; he accepts this condition, choosing identification rather than the struggle for autonomy.[29] At the end of the novel, Winston sits in the Chestnut Tree Cafe: the "chest-nut," the heart, surrounds Winston, he does not surround it. It is the fulfillment of O'Brien's earlier prophecy: "Do you see that thing facing you? That is the last man. If you are human, that is humanity" (187). Admitting defeat in the will to recovery, Orwell chronicles the last gasp of a romantic presence in the novel.

§

Postmodernism, emphasizing excesses of signification, generates a thematics and a poetics that is even more highly susceptible than modernism to paranoia, to the portrayal of reading as plot. If modernist paranoia is an attempt to preserve an older model of the subject, postmodern paranoia will look somewhat different from Orwell's version. In this section, I want to briefly examine another textual avatar of paranoia, Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49,* focusing on several differences between it and Orwell's version of paranoia and on the implications of these differences.

Pynchon's text operates at the juncture of modernism and postmodernism rather than that of romanticism and modernism.[30] Again, paranoia registers the disruptions caused by the shifting grounds underneath the subject. "In a single day, how many non-signifying fields do we cross? Very few, sometimes none," Roland Barthes wrote in 1957 (112); it is as if the world has increasingly made itself amenable to being read like a novel. As the sense of the subject constructed in and through an encounter with signs becomes pervasive, it is the modernist subject—patching signs into coherence, shoring fragments against the ruins—who is under siege, in need of rescue.

As Brian McHale notes, Pynchon's fiction is structured around the tension between a desire for the textual unity of modernism—a text that makes sense—and the proliferation of signs. *The Crying of Lot 49* is built around a set of codes that gives the appearance of unity but in fact could simply be a random collection of signs, the posthumous pulsing of Inverarity's game. Oedipa, in turn, struggles mightily to replace a narrative coherence that has been lost to the multiple connections. Driving to San Narciso, Oedipa resolves "to pull in at the next motel she saw, however ugly, stillness and four walls having become preferable at this point to this illusion of speed, freedom, wind in your hair, unreeling landscapes" (26). For Wordsworth the "scanty plot" of ground promises a deeper reality, but for Oedipa the "scanty plot" of the four walls represents a blessed relief from the proliferation of signs. Pynchon imagines Wordsworth's "narrow convent room" not as a source of the aesthetic sublime but as an escape, a fixing of untrammeled possibilities. What is to be contained is Oedipa herself, the motel room functioning like the tupperware that opens the novel. Oedipa seeks to know herself, both as the material body that Pynchon's text withholds—she is never physically described—and as the material grounding for her disembodied emotions. Like Driblette, who wants to "give the spirit flesh" (79), Oedipa is looking for a narrative framework that will support her desire for connection.

If Pynchon's characters represent this yearning, so does the rhetoric of the text itself. By constructing an elaborately cross-referenced puzzle that seems to reveal new unities with each reading, Pynchon's text both validates and ironizes the quest for meaning. Leo Bersani's reading of paranoia in *Gravity's Rainbow* makes just such a claim for paranoia, and it is a claim that distinguishes Pynchon's version of paranoia from Orwell's:

> It is, then, only within the paranoid structure itself—and not in some extra-paranoid myth such as love or anarchic randomness—that we can begin to resist the persecutions which paranoia imagines, and, more subtly, authorizes. ("Pynchon" 109)

For Bersani, the paranoid move is to "combine opposition with doubling" (108), the visible becoming a deceptive double of the "real." Paranoia, then, provides for a "model of unreadability, a convincing failure of self-knowledge" (118) that allows for the maintenance of the subject in a fluid state of becoming. The novel ends just before the actual crying of lot 49. We return to what poses as a moment of ontological certainty, the title, even as the novel resists the closure, the moment of self-identity that the title promises. Indeed, for Pynchon in *The Crying of Lot 49,* paranoia becomes a mode of knowing that, at least provisionally, accepts the rhetorical ground of postmodernism as a rich new field for the exercise of modernist reading. As Dr. Hilarius notes, "in relative paranoia . . . at least I know who I am and who the others are" (136). The "knowing" Pynchon represents points in two directions at once: it is both knowledge of a perfect text that might still evoke or map onto a world of humans and knowledge of the necessity of text, with its infinite deferrals, in constructing subjectivities.

The scene in the bathroom at Echo Courts, when Oedipa cannot find her image in the mirror, emblematizes the difference between Pynchon and Orwell. "At some point she went into the bathroom, tried to find her image in the mirror and couldn't. She had a moment of nearly

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pure terror. Then she remembered that the mirror had broken and fallen in the sink" (41). Art no longer holds a mirror up to nature; the mirror is shattered. If art is to be renewed, it will not be because the texts make sense, but because Oedipa chooses to read them as if they do. The narcissistic presumption of centrality that underpins paranoia here gives birth to semiotic solipsism. Though the mirror has shattered, Oedipa will continue to read, her (and the text's) paranoia a shoring of fragments against the ruins. Pynchon's coherent subject, as McHale argues, is a modernist, at home in a world of signs. Pynchon answers the paranoid tendency to allow language to ossify into a frozen stringency with a kind of hyperparanoia, the riotous capacity of the word to generate new meanings, new secrets.

It is this playfulness that finally distinguishes Pynchon's version of paranoia from Orwell's. Pierce Inverarity remains forever out of reach in *The Crying of Lot 49*—Oedipa will continue to stumble over his tracks, conspiracies will continue to be nurtured in the back halls of bureaucracy, but we will never get to the heart of the plot. There is no lifting of the curtain to reveal a Big Brother at whose loving breast Winston suckles in the last lines of *1984*. Finally, the networks are too complex and untraceable; as for Hardy, paranoia is more a wish than a successful practice. The "scanty plot" of the paranoid becomes a potential means of containing narrative, a sea wall against the tides of signs that threaten to wash away the subject. Though Oedipa may never fix herself in or to the world, hope resides in the fact that metaphor can connect anything: "Our beauty lies . . . in this extended capacity for convolution," the child star turned lawyer Metzger observes. Paranoia simultaneously promises to unpack the convolution and to reify it.

In Pynchon's new introduction to *1984,* he observes that Big Brother and the system he presides over "put the whole question of soul, of what we believe to be an inviolable inner core of the self, into harsh and terminal doubt" (xxiii). But for Pynchon, such an "inviolable core" remains a possibility in *The Crying of Lot 49,* because signs are finally fluid, entropic, simultaneously demanding and resisting paranoia's attempts at fixing. There is still a future hope that a coherent subject will materialize within or out of the text. In place of Orwell's grim monologicity, Pynchon's postmodern paranoia offers an intertextuality capable of forging new possibilities for connection and play, the endangered subject safely stowed behind the walls of text. If there is a melancholy that attaches to Pynchon's project, it properly belongs to modernism, to the sense that there is an unspeakable loss at the heart of narrative, a "postmodern sublime," in Marc Redfield's phrase (159), that is always yet be recovered.[31] If postmodernism asks us to perceive texts within a framework of *jouissance,* where signs dart and dance, weaving a simulacrum of the world that is liberating, it is modernism that combs the text for evidence of design. The author is buried but not dead, in Pynchon's words, "like Maxwell's demon . . . the linking feature in a coincidence" (120–21).

This paranoia of the postmodern embraces the world of signs that Orwell struggles against. If *The Crying of Lot 49* is a "critique of epistemology" (O'Donnell 87), it is also a defense of the subject as reader. But in Orwell's text, it is not fluidity but rigidity that paranoia imposes, with reading a correlate for being read. This difference cuts to the heart of the distinction between Orwell's paranoia and that of the postmodern: for the revanchist romantic in Orwell, the signs themselves are the problem, the mark of a world that has come too much to resemble a novel and a subject that has come too much to resemble a character.

It is significant that in the scene with which I began the discussion of *1984,* it is seemingly the picture that speaks back. If Oedipa cannot see herself in the frame, Winston's look yields up an all-too-objective reflection. Unlike Oedipa, his role as reader has been fatally compromised by the shift of authority from the viewer to the work. Art speaks, Winston can only listen. For Orwell, still suspended between romantic and modernist poetics, paranoia takes on a darker tincture, becoming the record of the struggle to rescue from modernist poetics a subject that exists outside of text. "You are outside history," O'Brien tells Winston (179), but to return to history is to be destabilized in the rewriting of it. Anticipating Harold Bloom's influence model, in which the strong poet wrestles with precursor poets, Orwell's paranoia is the symptom of a moment of aesthetic contention. If for Bloom the struggle is with the past, Orwell also contends with the future. It is not only the voice of his forebears that assails Orwell, it is also the voice that would "swerve," as Bloom would put it, and rewrite the past to which he is committed.

Orwell's masterpiece resides not just at a crucial temporal-historical juncture but also at the intersection of the competing literary discourses that collide in Orwell the artist. O'Brien's comment "Men are infinitely malleable" (179) resonates not just with totalitarian presumptions about humanity but also literature's: Winston's plight becomes an allegory for the changing structures by which men are generated anew in each era.

The paranoid poetics of *1984* enact this tension as well at the structural level, staging a struggle with modernist poetics that produces, instead of a bildungsroman in which character is forged via the gaining of knowledge through the encounter with "life," a reverse bildungsroman in which character is diminished to a vanishing point of textuality. Modernism shatters the romantic, lyric voice; out of the fragments Orwell reconstructs a romantic version of textual sense to replace "essence." The signs may be blowing apart, but by reading them as indicative of a plot directed toward the solitary individual, Orwell reclaims a grandiose, utopian centrality for Winston. Then, though the radical passivity that governs the text—Winston is not the reader but the read—affords Winston a no less central position, it is the centrality of the inmate. Orwell's "scanty plot" becomes a prison-house for the romantic subject.

Notes

1. See Pynchon's new introduction to *1984* for the most recent example. Also see William Steinhoff. Alex Zwerdling gives an excellent account of Orwell's relationship to politics in *Orwell and the Left,* focusing particularly on his struggle to adapt fiction to political ends during the 1930s and 40s.

2. Raymond Williams, on the other hand, claims that Orwell fails to recognize the material relations of his own created world, chalking up this failure to his "obsession with ideology" (77).

3. By using the word *poetics* here, I mean to say that the novel's paranoia appears not only in its theme, characters, or subject matter (though it does appear in each of these) but also that it appears in what Peter Brooks calls the "logic of narrative" (21): as a dynamic structural and syntactic element that parallels, rehearses, and illuminates paranoid psychic organization (3–36). In an effort to move beyond traditional formalism, Brooks articulates a relation between the movements of desire and those of narrative. He suggests that in "plot" we see a working through and out of a hermeneutic code that draws its energy from psychic economies of desire. David Shapiro's influential book *Neurotic Styles* is also seminal in enabling a consideration of paranoia not as a clinical designation but as a set of formal operations. Shapiro draws attention to the formal qualities inherent in such categories as "suspicious cognition," "projection," "biased attention" (59), "lack of spontaneity," and "disdain for the obvious" (64), identifying the attendant operations as hallmarks of paranoid modes of thinking. My description below draws heavily on Shapiro.

4. Rather than theorizing paranoia as cultural pathology, I am treating it through the lens of poetics in order to suggest its recent lineage as a literary "style" and to sketch out some of the implications of this formal history. Many recent texts explore various aspects of the relation between paranoia, literature, and culture, including those by Trotter, Melley, Fenster, O'Donnell, Bywater, and Bersani.

5. Of Joyce he said, "Joyce is so interesting I can't stop talking about him once I start" (*Collected Essays* 1: 128), and he grouped both Joyce and Eliot among "the writers I care most about and never grow tired of" (3: 24). He defended their rejection of a moral message and their emphasis on technique rather than didacticism a la Spender, Auden, and MacNeice, saying, for example, of Joyce, "Joyce was a technician and very little else, about as near to being a 'pure' artist as any writer can be" (3: 124). Still, of Eliot he did apparently grow tired, writing in 1942, "there is very little in Eliot's later work that makes any deep impression on me" (3: 236). Patricia Rae traces Orwell's complicated relationship to Eliot more fully.

6. Trotter argues that the writers in question sought to demonstrate "an expertise freed from the institutionalized imitativeness of bureaucratic revelation" (9). Ultimately, he uses this argument to explain the transformation of modernist to postmodern paranoia; paranoia is "no longer a strategy for acquiring symbolic capital, it has become a *form* of symbolic capital"—that is, "proof of literary sophistication" in its own right (326; Trotter's italics).

7. Both O'Donnell and Melley historicize paranoia in terms of the postwar American experience. O'Donnell locates paranoia within the "multifarious contradiction of a postmodern condition" that characterizes late capitalism in America (14), while Melley pays particular attention to paranoia's emergence in American literature in the face of nuclear anxiety, the Red Scare, and the Cold War. O'Donnell sees paranoia in the context of postmodernity's contradictions: "libidinal investment in mutability . . . contests with an equally intense investment in the commodification of discrete identities" (14). In Melley's account, the incursion of the military-industrial complex into daily life gives rise to a sense of powerlessness. He traces the disruption of subjectivity to "agency panic" (11), the "feeling of diminished human agency" that invites the enforced coherence of paranoia in order to contain perceived threats to autonomy. Similarly, Mark Fenster examines conspiracy theories as a form of "populist possibility" (xiii). He views paranoia in a somewhat mixed light, critiquing Hofstader's efforts to apply a "theory of individual pathology to a social phenomenon" (21) because it overlooks the ways in which paranoia and conspiracy theories posit a potential alternative to power through "redirect[ing] the populism of conspiracy theory" (21).

Much of the wealth of recent critical work focuses on American manifestations of paranoia, including anthologies edited by George Marcus and by Jane Parish and Martin Parker. A notable exception is Trotter's work discussed above. Taking another tack, Linda Fisher locates paranoia within the hermeneutical "tradition of suspicion" (109) growing out of Marx, Nietszche, and Freud and carried forward by Ricoeur and Gadamer. Building on these theories, it is paranoia as a "literary" pathology that most interests me here.

8. While romanticism and modernism are both obviously contentious categories, I want to deal with them here as constituting a fluid but recognizable set of characteristic tropes, figures, and structures. As precedent for this, I am following the approach taken by critics such as Ihab Hassan ("Toward a Concept of Postmodernism") for modernism and postmodernism and Wellek for romanticism. For Wellek, romanticism is characterized by "imagination for the view of poetry, nature for the view of the world, and symbol and myth for poetic style" (161).

9. Alex de Jonge argues that the eighteenth century brings a "fundamental sense of ontological unease" (4) and that "strong feeling comes to act as a substitute for meaning" (5). Romantic agony thus becomes an attempt to find wholeness not in timeless structures of order and truth but in the individual's capacity for repairing his or her newly fragmented sense of self with a sensation of supreme presence. De Jonge argues that intensity, with its exaggeration of feeling and presence, is capable of "healing the cleavage between subject and object" (26) that is characteristic of the romantic consciousness.

10. Salomon Resnik calls attention to the paranoid's confusion about how fictions work, calling it a "lack of the capacity to metaphorize correctly and to symbolize experience" (24). This failure of metaphor suggests a failure of separation between the signifier and the signified. The reduction of the world to a provisionally stable signifying system and the absorption of all information into the system are the paranoid's solution to the problem of otherness.

11. Resnik describes the stakes of this process of organization through what he calls a "catastrophic fragmentation" of the paranoid ego (24), in which the fragmented ego appears on the outside as a multiplication of plot points, the threat coming not from one location but from everywhere at once. The paranoid narrative links these independent nodes into a narrative with systemic integrity, paralleling the paranoid's attempt to make himself whole again. Indifferent events are incorporated both into the paranoid narrative and, by extension, the paranoid's projected ego. When relinked, these plot points again constitute a bounded ego formation, though this iteration is external. The paranoid narrative is thus able to reclaim the scattered object world through the

strength of the paranoid's integrative principle; the unconscious, once external and alien, returns to the paranoid in the form of this latticework of fragments linked together in a coherent narrative.

12. The "indescribable grandeur" that Freud's famous Dr. Schreber sees in his visions is incorporated into Schreber's own identity (*Three Case Histories* 144). God demands that Schreber become a woman and bride, to give birth to a "new race of men, born from the spirit of Schreber" (133). The modern narrative of accommodation in which the character must learn to accept his lack of grandiosity (for example Gordon Comstock in Orwell's *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*) plays out the failure of such aspirations as tragedy. In a paranoid text, we see a movement toward successful completion of the transformation not as metaphor for the striving of the soul but as literal accomplishment.

13. Freud associates hysteria with art, obsessional neurosis with religion, and paranoia with philosophy. He writes: "a paranoiac delusion is a caricature of a philosophical system" (*Totem* 92). Like philosophy, paranoia imagines a single viewpoint from which perception fans outward to encompass the world within a closed system. It is worth noting also the static nature of such a gaze.

14. David Lodge provides a useful model for understanding the relation between modernism and postmodernism. Essentially, modernism's predicate is Saussurian linguistics—not mimetic but autonomous language—while postmodernism, seeking to subvert continuity, is suspicious of the mimetic and the metaphorical coherence of modernism and so turns to intertextuality, permutations, contradiction, and excess (6–7, 13–16). In "Toward a Concept of Postmodernism," Hassan proposes a set of convenient distinctions between modernism and postmodernism, such as modernism's hierarchical schema vs. postmodernism's anarchy, or transcendence vs. immanence.

15. Jean Baudrillard writes:

> If hysteria was the pathology of the exacerbated staging of the subject, a pathology of expression, of the body's theatrical and operatic conversion; and if paranoia was the pathology of organization, of the structuration of a rigid and jealous world; then with communication and information, with the immanent promiscuity of these networks, with their continual connections, we are now in a new form of schizophrenia. (133)

For Baudrillard, the schizophrenic experience of postmodernity threatens to obliterate narrative coherence. Paranoia, in this incarnation, wrestles with the random play of signs, the "immanent promiscuity" of networks, in order to reassert coherence. O'Donnell resists such a formulation, arguing that the opposition is insufficient, since the paranoid also "relies on the segmentation that characterizes the schizoid regime" (28). Later he makes an interesting comment on Deleuze and Guattari's borrowing of paranoia to counter schizophrenia, noting that "the partial and interlocking conspiracies that the paranoid must negotiate in order to signify her or himself as the mobile subject of conspiracies must always be in process" (28–29).

16. Similarly, Patricia Rae argues that the character of Charrington in *1984* represents Eliot, and hence Orwell's disillusionment with modernist poetics, specifically the embrace of purely aesthetic appeal and the positing of history as a thing largely unrecoverable. For Rae, the glass paperweight in the novel represents the deception of modernism: the image that appears at first as a "metaphysical conceit" and to hold out the possibility of salvation is in fact "impotent" (211), subject to breakage.

17. Orwell himself called *1984* a "fantasy, but in the form of a naturalistic novel" (qtd. in Zwerdling, "Orwell's Psychopolitics" 106). Alldritt also associates Orwell with Dickens and Zola.

18. Similarly, in "The Lion and the Unicorn" he defends a version of English socialism that at its best "will crush any open revolt promptly and cruelly, but it will interfere very little with the spoken and written word" (*Collected Essays* 2: 102).

19. This is the same struggle that Joyce invokes in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in Stephen's and the Jesuit's dispute over the tundish.

20. For a specifically modernist context for this sentiment, see Eliot's Prufrock: Prufrock's mermaids sing "each to each" but will not sing to him.

21. Hans Georg Gadamer asks if the romantic individual, with his attendant sense of interiority and distinctiveness from what is outside, is no more than "a kind of Robinson Crusoe dream of the historical enlightenment, the fiction of an unattainable island, as artificial as Crusoe himself, for the alleged primary phenomenon of the *solus ipse?"* (qtd. in Sass 253).

22. As Freud notes, the paranoid's "delusions of observation" are "justified," since it is the paranoid's identification with the ego-ideal that enables him to, in effect, watch himself (*Collected Papers* 118).

23. This is perversely Arnoldean in its suggestion that culture represents timeless virtue, but it is also directly antithetical to the romantic sense of a numinous truth that lurks deep within the individual imagination. In fact, this view has more in common with the post-Marxist, postmodern critique of language as a cultural formation, in which language is written by culture, not authors.

24. Shapiro notes that the paranoid is unable to give up his or her rigid control for the spontaneity and playfulness of laughter (77, 78). James Hillman finds a similarity between humor and poetry in this regard, suggesting that literary language is the antidote to paranoia. He writes: "Self-contrary, punning, aphoristic statements would make literalism impossible right at its roots, in the words and letters themselves" (23). Later Hillman again links humor to poetry, both operating as potential disruptors of paranoid fixation: "The poetic perplexes meaning as humor transposes it, preventing captivity in the revelatory text" (43).

25. See also Zamiatin's *We;* Zamiatin concurs with Dostoevsky.

26. The above passage is actually the plot of *1984* in a nutshell, only there anxiety about return is not an exaggerated personal response, it is the material out of which the world has been constructed. The extent to which *1984* stands as fulfillment of Bowling's anxiety is striking in other places in the text as well. Here is an example, with elements from *1984* inserted in brackets:

> But it isn't the war that matters, it's the after-war. The world we're going down into, the kind of hate-world, slogan-world [war is peace]. The coloured shirts, the barbed wire, the rubber truncheons. The secret cells where the electric light burns night and day [the place where there is no darkness], and the detectives watching you while you sleep [the thought police] and the processions and posters with enormous faces, and the crowds of a million people all cheering for the leader till they deafen themselves into thinking that they really worship him [the two-minute hate], and all the time, underneath, they hate him so they really want to puke. It's all going to happen. Or isn't it? Some days I know it's impossible, other days I know it's inevitable. (176)

27. Freud's sense of a homosexual etiology for paranoia is significant here, though problematic. See Shapiro 86–87 for a critique.

28. Several critics develop readings that pose *1984* as oedipal journey. Zwerdling argues that Orwell "reconceptualiz[es] political life" ("Orwell's Psychopolitics" 107) within the post-Freudian context of social pathology explored by Fromm and Arendt. The "incomprehensible violence of childhood fantasy meshed all too well with the bizarre and frightening reality of the modern police state," Zwerdling writes of Orwell (93), indicating the extent to which he grasped how totalitarian regimes reproduce the "politics of family life" (94–95). Similarly, Murray Sperber suggests that the paranoia of the novel is Orwell's response to "the irrational demands of the parental world" (218), and Marcus Smith sees Winston "clearly and carefully developed along familiar oedipal

lines" (423). Smith argues that Winston's progress is a return to his mother and his own unconscious, which is never fully seized. For a comprehensive psychological approach, see Richard I. Smyer.

29. In his essay "Before the Law" Jacques Derrida puns on what it means to be "before" the law. Speaking of Kafka's *The Trial,* he poses law as an infinitely recessive category that takes its authority from its nonappearance; we are always under its sway, yet always prior to it. Winston, in fact, closes the temporal disjuncture—he enters the chamber of the law, Big Brother—but must empty himself out to do so.

30. There is a great wealth of Pynchon criticism that renders this and similar points. The following reading builds particularly on the readings of Brian McHale, Marc Redfield, O'Donnell, and Bersani. McHale in particular focuses on Oedipa in *The Crying of Lot 49* as a modernist reader of her fictive real.

31. Redfield poses a sublime in postmodernism that relocates the romantic sublime. Shifting the locus of the sublime to the "relations between author and text or, more generally, between narrative and discontinuity" (153), he argues that Pynchon's intermingling of the figurative and the imaginary pushes "past the possibilities of a representational language" (159). According to Redfield, "the sublime operates to console and empower a subject threatened with decentering" (159).

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Bound in *Blackwood's*: The Imperialism of "The Heart of Darkness" in Its Immediate Context

William Atkinson

We now read *Heart of Darkness* as an independent text or as part of an anthology of texts representative of their period and culture. Or perhaps we read it in its 1902 form, bookended between "Youth" and "The End of the Tether." Its first readers, on the other hand, came upon "The Heart of Darkness"[1] in three successive issues of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, a long-established monthly with a clearly delineated political attitude. They read it not only as a work of Conrad's but also as part of *Blackwood's*. My premise is that embedded in *Blackwood's*, "The Heart of Darkness" functioned somewhat differently from the way it functions elsewhere. An archaeologist is always careful to preserve the immediate context of an artifact in order to establish how it was used by its makers; once we place the artifact in a collection, we are using it for purposes of our own. What follows, then, is an essay in literary archaeology: some suggestions on how the immediate context of "The Heart of Darkness"—the February, March, and April 1899 issues of *Blackwood's*—would have influenced what its first readers made of it.

Conrad remarked in a letter to William Blackwood that he thought the subject of his African story very much "of our time" (*Letters* 2: 140); he meant that it dealt with imperialism, specifically with King Leopold's colonial project in central Africa. Few scholars today would quibble with the claim that Conrad's narrative is about imperialism, but what it says about imperialism and just whose imperialism it has in mind are more contentious matters. There is a mass of scholarship that explains what was going on in the Congo and who was doing it, and there are extensive studies of the discourse on Africa and imperialism, the discourse within which *Heart of Darkness* operated. A contemporary Conradian brings so much of this material to *Heart of Darkness* that the story looks very different now from the way it did 30 years ago. Is this ambient textual material now part of Conrad's text? No, but many instructors put together a set of materials gathered from various sources to provide background—historiographical pieces, articles from other journals of the period, and pertinent criticism. Bound together, these materials become a single text unified by their relationship to Conrad's text. And when we bind *Heart of Darkness* together with such background material, we have a third text. One example is the "enriched" *Heart of Darkness* published in 1972 by Pocket Books: in the middle of the narrative is a 48-page "reader's supplement" containing biographical, historical, and critical material. Another is Ross C. Murfin's 1996 "case study" *Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness,* two-thirds of which consists of critical essays. While in these two examples all the additional material points toward Conrad's story, John Kucich's *Fictions of Empire* binds together *Heart of Darkness,* Kipling's "The Man Who Would Be King," and Stevenson's "The Beach of Falesa" with other materials that address imperialism.

The Pocket Books volume foregrounds Conrad's story, the Kucich book foregrounds imperialism, and the Murfin collection could be regarded as foregrounding literary critical theory and practice, using Conrad's text as the occasion. Thus, the company a text keeps will affect how we read it. In what sort of material was the original text, "The Heart of Darkness," embedded? In what direction was that textual bedrock aligned?

"Personality in a periodical publication"

There is evidence that Conrad was keen to become a *Blackwood's* writer. He did not care very much for popular magazines, even though they paid him well for his fiction, but he regarded *Blackwood's* as an exception: "One was in decent company there and had a good sort of public" (*Letters* 2: 130). He was happy to place "Karain," which he had written at a venture, with the magazine in November 1897, but he wrote "Youth" the next year with *Blackwood's* in mind. We hear of him studying to master the prevailing ethos, reading back issues of the magazine, and consulting

Margaret Oliphant's 1897 *Annals of a Publishing House: William Blackwood and his Sons* (Knowles and Moore 39).[2] Clearly the magazine had a very definite identity.

The word *magazine* derives from an Arabic word meaning a storehouse, a place where goods are laid up. It implies something orderly and coherent. Having been brought together in one place by an organizing intelligence, the various objects take on a unity in diversity. A written magazine achieves the same effect by showing a degree of consistency from article to article and from month to month or week to week. The texts come from a variety of people, but there is editorial continuity—continuity of taste and political attitude—and once they are physically bound together, the unity of the publication takes precedence over its diversity. At the simplest material level, there is consistency of typeface among the various articles and stories, and this consistency prevails not only in individual numbers but also across time. Most periodicals are careful to establish and maintain a physical character and are reluctant to make major changes. The font a magazine uses for its title becomes as familiar to its readers as a human face; to change it is tantamount to announcing a change of character.

Over time, then, a magazine develops a character. The readers know what sort of ideas will be entertained and what sort will be dismissed. They know what the magazine will laugh at and what it will consider out of bounds for humor. The magazine becomes as predictable, or unpredictable within limits, as a group of friends. We have all seen letters to the editor announcing a decision to cancel a subscription; such letters usually express a very personal sense of betrayal and consequent anger or sorrow, a feeling that the magazine has strayed too far from the reader's key beliefs.

In the February 1899 *Blackwood's,* the Looker-on (the regular editorialist and commentator) remarks on the publication's unusual continuity of character:

> Minds change under the same influences; and it might almost be that the same mind, so influenced, has carried on the Magazine from the first number to the thousandth. So it is, too, that "Maga" has a personality more individual, more constant and pronounced, than is seen in any other creature of its kind; and what I mean by personality in a periodical publication (strong clear character is one interpretation of the word) is a great thing. (428)

The Looker-on is making a strong claim: that the magazine has maintained a largely consistent identity over a period of 82 years. Such constancy must have attracted a readership that knew what it was getting. The well-established character of *Blackwood's* would have had a powerful hermeneutic force; thus, if readers experienced any minor cognitive dissonance between what they expected of *Blackwood's* and what they found in Conrad's narrative, *Blackwood's* would probably have prevailed.

While the well-established reputation of *Blackwood's* would have played its role in creating the reader's horizon of interpretation, the motifs and themes from other material in the same issue were as significant in this regard as the overall character of the magazine. The identity of a particular text, in this case the individual number of the magazine rather than the discrete stories and articles, is generated by a number of cohesive processes, including the recurrence of particular terms or motifs. We are troubled if we find that a symbol seems to carry different meanings at different points within a text, and we unconsciously work hard to perceive cohesion. "All interpretation is highlighting," Gadamer tells us (362). And the recurrence of particular themes across sections of the magazine would have the effect of highlighting them. The original reader would have tended to take the whole magazine as a largely cohesive unity, as a hermeneutic totality. This tendency was encouraged by the fact that most of the articles and some of the stories were anonymous, as if emanating from a single source, one for which William Blackwood himself took responsibility. From a Bakhtinian viewpoint, reading "The Heart of Darkness" as part of a much larger text might seem to multiply the voices, to make the reading experience more dialogic and less hermeneutically certain. But such is not the case. The additional voices are largely of one mind on the subject of imperialism, so any small voice of opposition that makes itself heard in *Heart of Darkness* is drowned out by these louder and more certain tones, those of the magazine's venerable personality.

Founded in July 1817 by William Blackwood (grandfather of the owner and editor in Conrad's day), the magazine, according to Walter Graham, was set up as "a more pert and nimble *Quarterly [Review]*, as a Tory organ, designed to give smart opposition to the [Whig] *Edinburgh Review*" (276). Under its first editors—John Wilson, James Hogg, and John Gibson Lockhart—the magazine quickly gained a reputation for the venom of its personal attacks and critical notices. It was from these early pages that Lockhart conducted his campaign of vilification against Leigh

Hunt, Keats, and Hazlitt, "the Cockney School of Poetry," as he styled it. Such was the vitriol of some of the contributors that several victims, Hazlitt among them, brought successful suits against the magazine. But *Blackwood's* did not long maintain its reputation as an enfant terrible. By midcentury, while still overtly political, it had developed an avuncular tone, delighting in its nickname Maga. In Conrad's time, it was, in Ivo Vidan's words, "conservative and imperialist, an old British magazine with a long reputation and a steady readership in the Establishment" (405).

Blackwood's liked to regard itself as a cut above other publications. Even J. H. Harper, writing of his own magazine, seems to have bought into Maga's own view of itself. He writes that there are only two types of general-interest magazines, *Blackwood's* being the original of one type and *Harper's* of the other:

> Some things—for example, the best kind of fiction—might be common to both, but there would always be this difference, that *Blackwood* would by choice appeal to a limited class of highly cultivated readers, proposing to meet special demands of that class, while *Harper* would be addressed to all readers of average intelligence, having for its purpose their entertainment and illumination, meeting in a general way the varied claims of their human intellect and sensibility. (qtd. in Tye 44)

From his perspective 70 years later, James Tye finds that *Harper's* contributors are now regarded as a more distinguished and better-known group than those who wrote for *Blackwood's*. "With the exception of Conrad," he finds, "original writing in verse and prose was completely undistinguished" (23). Indeed, the three numbers in which "The Heart of Darkness" appeared do not aim at a particularly high level of cultivation: the fiction is for the most part easily digestible, and much of the other material suggests people whose principal interests lie in hunting, shooting, and the empire. Harper puts his finger on the matter when he talks of "a limited class." *Blackwood's* had a circulation of only 6,000 to 7,000.[3] But the readership was wealthy, and it was cultivated in the sense that products of the British public school were a breed apart. They certainly thought of themselves as such, and were rich enough and powerful enough to make their views count; and *Blackwood's* represented their politics.

This was the publication that took "Karain" and then "Youth," the first Marlow narrative; and William Blackwood was pleased enough with

Conrad's work to use "The Heart of Darkness" as the lead fiction in the magazine's thousandth number. The story ran through three issues (February, March, and April); and in October of the same year, Blackwood began the serialization of *Lord Jim*. But when we consider the later critical orthodoxy on *Heart of Darkness,* a puzzle presents itself. What was a text that tells the story of imperialism gone horribly wrong doing in a magazine that prided itself on its support for imperialism, and many of whose readers were actually involved in the colonial project?

From the 1960s until the 1980s, most scholars who considered Conrad's politics read *Heart of Darkness* as ultimately anti-imperialist. Eloise Knapp Hay, in 1963, saw the text as a vigorous critique of imperialism and racism, one from which "England is in no way exempt" (154). Frederick Karl, writing in 1979, suggested that William Blackwood, "his ingrained sense of traditional values and his conservative literary tastes" notwithstanding, knew what he was unleashing on his readers, and his publishing "The Heart of Darkness" and *Lord Jim* "were acts of tremendous perspicacity. For these works, seen from the perspective of 1899–1900, were little less than revolutionary, both in content and in their shaping" (394). Cedric Watts, in 1989, characterized the *Blackwood's* of Conrad's time as "staid, sober, rational and unadventurous" (79), and he likened the presence of "The Heart of Darkness" in its pages to a shark in a carp pond (81).

By the late 1980s, possibly in response to Chinua Achebe's ferocious 1975 attack on both text ("an offensive and deplorable book" [14]) and author ("Conrad was a thoroughgoing racist" [11]), scholars began to acknowledge that *Heart of Darkness* was of its time, and its time was ideologically unappealing. Since many of these scholars were unwilling to follow Achebe in discharging the text into the utter darkness beyond the anthologies and class reading lists, all the sophistication of poststructuralist reading protocols had to be called on. Patrick Brantlinger, for example, while noting the text's criticism of King Leopold's imperialism, also acknowledges that "its anti-imperialist message is undercut by its racism, by its reactionary political attitudes, by its impressionism." Nonetheless, Brantlinger detects a tentative redemptive radicalism:

> There are few novels, however, which so insistently invoke a moral idealism they do not seem to contain and in which the modernist will-to-style is subjected to such powerful self-scrutiny—in which the voice at the heart of the novel, the voice of

> modern literature, the voice of imperialist civilization itself may in its purest, freest form yield only "The horror! The horror!" (274)

The contemporary reader might thus find the text redeemed from its compromises, although Conrad himself may remain beyond salvation.

Edward Said, in *Culture and Imperialism,* recognizes that while Conrad is critical of imperialism, he does not offer any alternative, seeming to take European tutelage of the colonized as a given. "As a creature of his time, Conrad could not grant the natives their freedom, despite his severe critique of the imperialism that enslaved them" (30). However, Said finds redemption in what he sees as the text's epistemology, a very up-to-date-looking antiessentialism:[4]

> By accentuating the discrepancy between the official "idea" of empire and the remarkably disorienting actuality of Africa, Marlow unsettles the reader's sense not only of the very idea of empire, but of something more basic, reality itself. For if Conrad can show that all human activity depends on controlling a radically unstable reality to which words approximate only by will or convention, the same is true of a world being made and unmade more or less all the time. (29)

Both Brantlinger and Said see Conrad's story as a historical artifact of surpassing interest for what it tells us about the discourse within which it swam. In this they represent the contemporary orthodoxy on the text: that it was very much of its time, replete with prejudices unpalatable to contemporary sensibilities. But they contrive to mitigate such prejudices by showing how, at certain points, the text swam against the currents of its own discourse.[5] For quite some time now, a popular academic rescue operation on a classic text whose politics seem reactionary is to show that at some level it knew better than it said or could say. But the readers of the time had no need to read against the grain. The grain lay in the same direction that they thought, and if it did not, they would stop reading and possibly stop buying the magazine.

The claim by the earlier scholars I cited that such a fine crusted Tory as William Blackwood would be interested in introducing subversive material into his beloved Maga—in the thousandth number, no less—will not hold water. It is not as if *Blackwood's* had any kind of reputation for supporting the avant-garde. Nor might it be claimed that "The Heart of

Darkness" came upon the unsuspecting readers by stealth. Conrad, who had recently published two other stories in *Blackwood's* and was to publish there yet again within a few months, was a familiar name. In fact, the story would not have been at all unpalatable when read in its immediate context, bound with the rest of the *Blackwood's* material. The average *Blackwood's* reader would have been neither equipped nor inclined to read Conrad's story "against the grain," as ultimately subversive of its own and the reader's discourse. My account is an attempt to bring out and examine the grain of the magazine in which the "The Heart of Darkness" first appeared, to show how Conrad's narrative fits in the explicit and implicit imperialist ideology of the three numbers of *Blackwood's* from February to April 1899.[6]

"What saves us is efficiency"

Conrad's story was the lead fiction in the thousandth issue, coming immediately after a "Noctes Ambrosianae," a temporary revival of a series of semicomic dialogues that had run in *Blackwood's* from 1822 to 1835. They were an important element in the magazine's early success, so William Blackwood decided to give the "Noctes" one last curtain call for the thousandth number. As usual, the principal speakers are Christopher North (John Wilson), the voice of cultured Scotland, full of classical learning and Ciceronian periods, and the Ettrick Shepherd (James Hogg), who speaks broad Lowland Scots. These two, with help from Tickler (John Gibson Lockhart) and the English Opium Eater (Thomas De Quincey), totter out of retirement to pass judgment on Britain at the end of the nineteenth century, and particularly to lend their moral weight to an assertion of the imperialist doctrine Maga now supported. More exactly, the doctrine acknowledged that imperialism was so difficult and dangerous that only the British were fit to undertake it. The French and other Continentals would always make a mess of things.

North's motto is, as it was 50 years earlier, "Church and Queen" (172). They are all Unionists to a man, committed to retaining Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom. For North—for Maga—union extends beyond the British isles to the empire as a whole: "the conception of the greatness and oneness of the Empire" (179). North believes that what he calls "the bad old Liberal view of foreign policy" has now been displaced by "the Imperial instinct" (178). He cites the battle of Majuba

Hill, almost 20 years earlier, as the nadir of this Gladstonian Liberalism. Having annexed the Transvaal in South Africa, the British gave it up after their defeat at the hands of the Dutch South African settlers. Gladstone, we are to understand, displayed nothing but "cowardice and scuttle" in abandoning the Transvaal so readily. Gladstone was never particularly keen to extend the empire, and even as late as 1899, *Blackwood's* continued to regard him as a bête noire.[7] But *Blackwood's* does not unhesitatingly support the new "forward imperialism," which is most closely related to the current colonial secretary, Joseph Chamberlain. North is a Disraeli man, relishing empire for its glory and greatness rather than for the profits that Chamberlain sees accruing to British businessmen. "The one man to whom the revival of patriotic sentiment is primarily due was Lord Beaconsfield [Benjamin Disraeli]," he writes. "We are all Jingoes now, thanks to him" (178). Accordingly, North has praise for Kipling, whom he regards as the heir to the late Tennyson's "note of patriotism." "A wonderfully vigorous and versatile writer, sir," agrees the English Opium-Eater (189).

Such is the ideology sketched out in the opening pages of the February number—an empire ready to protect itself and to expand, all in the interest of a glory that pushes commerce into a secondary role. Just what the glory might be is not entirely clear, but in "The Heart of Darkness" Marlow offers a reading. It is in the warm, vague light cast by the account in "Noctes" of British imperialism that the *Blackwood's* reader encounters Marlow's famous first sentence, "And this also has been one of the dark places of the earth" (195), inviting us to imagine ourselves in Britain on the eve of the Roman invasion. The ancient Britons represent absolute barbarism, so it might be assumed that the British of 1899 would be pleased to regard themselves as modern Romans and the nineteenth-century British empire as a later version of the mighty Roman empire. The matter is more complicated, however. Britain had been a Roman colony, but the occupation left no apparent cultural marks, only a few towns and associated buildings, and the British do not think of themselves as Latins—in fact, they often regard themselves, with some complacency, as positively non-Latin. And their attitude toward the Romans is ambivalent. When they think of themselves as British, they are Britons and the victims of the Roman imperialism. In 1902, Thomas Thorneycroft's statue of Queen Boadicea, who raised a bloody revolt against the Romans, was set up near the Houses of Parliament. So a rebel, albeit an unsuccessful one, received pride of place at the heart of the British empire. When the

British think of themselves as Anglo-Saxon, they are, of course, not British but heirs to those who displaced the Romans and introduced such English practices as trial by jury and beer drinking. So there is no reason for a *Blackwood's* reader to take offense at Marlow's judgment of the Romans:

> But these chaps were not much account really. They were no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more, I suspect. They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force. . . . They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a grand scale, and men going at it blind—as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. (196)

In fact, Marlow had explicitly distinguished the Romans from the modern British in the preceding sentence: "Mind, none of us would feel exactly like this. What saves us is efficiency—the devotion to efficiency" (196). After having come dangerously close to suggesting that "our" conquest of the earth is ugly, he again distinguishes British practice from Roman: "What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to" (196).

Marlow's reasoning will not bear very close analysis. He makes two distinctions: one between the reality of the idea of efficiency and the unreality of "sentimental pretence"—which will become associated with his aunt's notion about "weaning these ignorant millions from their horrid ways" (202) or the overblown rhetoric of Kurtz's report "Suppression of Savage Customs"—and the other between British and Roman imperialisms. Yet Marlow acknowledges the Romans to have been "a wonderful lot of handy men" (195), the very epitome of military efficiency. So there must be something superior about British as opposed to Roman efficiency. That something is the idea "at back of it." He implies that the idea behind efficiency, being essentially linked to the physical world, is more real than the ideals behind the other type of imperialism—the Continental variety. But if linkage to the physical world adds reality to an idea, how can he claim that the idea, which is not material, is what redeems British efficiency? Moreover, efficiency, the manner of doing something, provides no guidance as to what to do efficiently. Exterminate all the brutes or civilize them? Marlow's argument would not appear to offer any guidance as to the better course: whatever the decision, do it efficiently.

We could hardly expect a casual reader to pick apart Marlow's introductory remarks in this way, but even a careful *Blackwood's* reader would be unlikely to do so because the passage mirrors the unexamined premises behind British imperialism. Indeed, the idea of looking too closely into things is represented here as dangerous and un-British. In the "Noctes" North tells his listeners that the weakness of John Davidson's poetry stems from "introspection and the possession by vague and ill-understood ideas . . . he needs must expound theories and philosophies, and so he comes to grief" (189). Were he more like James Hogg, whose mind one assumes was never clouded by an idea, Davidson would be more successful, implies North. Learning and ideas, *Blackwood's* consistently maintains, are dangerous. There are a few people—North, for example—who are morally equipped to deal with ideas, who will not allow themselves to be carried away by them, but most people abuse them. Mr. Kurtz is one of the majority: "He had the faith. He could believe anything—anything. He would have been a splendid leader of an extreme party" (652). By the end of the narrative, we have heard of Africans bowing down to Kurtz himself and offering sacrifices—which just goes to show the dangers of sentimental pretence. Cool efficiency is the god before whom Marlow would have us bow down. The Outer Station, by contrast, is subject to "a flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly" (206), and the same flabby devil is "running the show" at the Central Station (210).

Marlow is emphatically not talking about a British colony. "You understand it was a Continental concern, that Trading Society; but I have a lot of relations living on the Continent, because it's cheap and not so nasty as it looks, they say" (198). A good deal of mud is quietly flying around in this sentence. The cheapness suggests an economy less developed than the British, and the idiom demands that "nasty" go with "cheap." Marlow appears to forestall the full insult with the droll save—"not so nasty as it looks"—but the idiomatic pairing of "cheap" and "nasty" is forced on us whether we think of it or not. Just in case we take him seriously and start to imagine the Continent as less nasty than we thought, he adds the disclaimer "they say," and we can hardly believe "them" since they live there. Even the Trading Society is retrospectively tarred with the same brush, since it is "a Continental concern." And this is key to the story's acceptability in Maga: the magazine as a whole encourages its readers, many of whom lived and worked in the empire, to read "The Heart of Darkness" as a critique of foreign—that is, Continental—imperialism and an analysis of why it is inferior to the British variety. Hunt Hawkins made a similar point in 1979 and 1992 (and Homi K. Bhabha reiterated it in 1994), but Hawkins reached his conclusions after a careful reading of the text and, above all, from his extensive knowledge of contemporary writing on imperialism. He establishes what people in general might have known about imperialism and about imperialism in the Congo, but he is not particularly interested in where their knowledge comes from. *Blackwood's* is for him no more than the site of first publication, rather than, as I am arguing, an entire empire of information and ideology on imperialism, of which "The Heart of Darkness" was one subject. We do not need to go any further afield than the immediate context of *Blackwood's* to show how easy it is to read Conrad's text as an attack on foreign imperialism and a defense of the British variety because the immediate context bends all the references to imperialism to such an effect.

"So stupid a colonial policy"

In the Company's head office, Marlow sees a large map of Africa marked in various colors, each of which represents a different colonizing power. Marlow's comments are instructive and surely meld with the *Blackwood's* reader's own prejudices. He sees "a vast amount of red [British]—good to see at any time, because one knows that some real work is done there"—the god of efficiency rules. There is "a deuce of a lot of blue"—French, and we should note the irritation implied by "deuce"—"a little green, smears of orange, and, on the East Coast, a purple patch, to show where the jolly pioneers of progress drink the jolly lager-beer" (199). "Smears" is surely demeaning, and for the Germans Marlow conjures up a familiar and deprecatory stereotype. In the middle is the yellow, where Marlow is going. The color tells the contemporary reader that he is going to King Leopold's Congo. Marlow never offers any place names with regard to his central African adventure—neither Belgium, Brussels, the Congo, nor Stanley Falls. But throughout the 1890s there had been so many news items and magazine articles about King Leopold's Congo that few readers, least of all *Blackwood's* readers, with their particular interest in all things imperial, would not have known where Marlow was talking about. While such readers would certainly not confuse Belgium with France, it is unlikely that they would regard the two countries as particularly distinct, since French was the language of both. Most readers were probably hazy about Flemish and the Flemings, and French is the language of the trading company that Marlow has joined. Agatha Christie was to make a running joke of how the English take the Belgian Hercule Poirot for a Frenchman and cannot summon up any great concern when their mistake is pointed out.[8] If France and Belgium are not the same, they are very similar, so criticism of French imperialism will reflect upon Belgian practice, and criticism of the Congo will reflect upon the French colonial empire.

The *Blackwood's* reader will not be allowed to forget that the French are the ancestral enemy. The same February number contains "A Letter from Salamanca," describing some incidents in a battle that took place during the war between Britain and the armies of Napoleon in Spain. A short story called "The Sword of Corporal Lacoste" follows. It concerns a cuirassier in the French imperial army who is a werewolf. The Looker-on ventilates about the "Madagascar Papers," which apparently reveal French bad faith and mendacity in a very clear light. We are assured that Lord Salisbury permitted the French protectorate of Madagascar on condition that British trade with the island could continue unabated. The French government, however, proceeded to use its power to destroy Anglo-Malagasy trade.

The March number begins with a memoir by Mrs. Charles Bagot of her father, Josceline Percy, who served under Nelson in the wars against Napoleon. Her uncle, Henry Percy, was aide-de-camp to Wellington at Waterloo, and the gloves that the Iron Duke wore at Waterloo are in her possession. How better to remind the reader of British superiority over the French than by invoking the names of the two men who, at the beginning of the century, finally dispatched them by sea and by land?

In February 1899, relations between Britain and France were at a particularly low point, and the two countries had nearly gone to war a month or two earlier. In July of the previous year, while the British were engaged in a war against the Mahdists in the Sudan, a French contingent, with the cooperation of the Belgian authorities in the Congo, took possession of Fashoda, on the Nile. Having defeated the Mahdi, General Kitchener, claiming the whole of the Sudan for Egypt (which was controlled by Britain), required the French to leave Fashoda. Had France been better prepared, there may well have been war, and Russia would have joined with France. As it was, the French evacuated Fashoda in November 1898. Matters were not finally settled until March 1899. Under the circumstances, Conrad's readership would have been reluctant to hear anything other than criticism of France, and he obliged.

Marlow sails for the Congo on a French steamer, "and she called in every blamed port they have out there, for, as far as I could see, the sole purpose of landing soldiers and custom-house officers" (202). He implies that the French have too many ports on the African coast and none of them is very significant. Nothing comes out of French Africa; they simply pour in manpower. "Settlements some centuries old, and still no bigger than pin heads on the untouched expanse of their background" (202–03): the French do not appear to have done very much "real work" during their long presence on the coast of the continent, so it is just as well that they have been displaced from the Nile. The customs officers are to levy tolls in a wilderness, and the soldiers are there to protect them. Some are drowned in the surf, but "nobody seemed particularly to care. They were just flung out there, and on we went" (203). Even the place names, Gran' Bassam or Little Popo, "seemed to belong to some sordid farce." At one point they see a French man-of-war "anchored off the coast. There wasn't even a shed there, and she was shelling the bush. It appears that the French had one of their wars going on thereabouts." Marlow speaks as if the French regularly went to war in a desultory fashion, not even clear about where they were fighting. "Pop, would go one of the eight-inch guns; a small flame would dart and vanish, a little white smoke would disappear, a tiny projectile would give a feeble screech—and nothing happened." Most naval guns go boom, and an eight-inch shell is hardly tiny—but not those of the French navy, it seems. Moreover, "There was a touch of insanity in the proceeding, a sense of lugubrious drollery in the sight."

Further on in the February number we find "A Vagabond Poet," an article that discusses the French poet Rimbaud. A quotation from the young poet is suggestive of the pre-Roman Thames that Marlow has invoked and of the Mr. Kurtz whom Conrad will bring forth two months hence. Rimbaud the poet is comparing himself to the Gauls:

> "From them I get idolatry and the love of sacrilege;—oh! all the vices, anger, lust,—'tis magnificent, lust—above all, falsehood and

> idleness. I have a horror of all trades. Masters and workmen, all are peasants, ignoble. The hand on the pen is stronger than the hand on the plough." And so he sets forth his lack of restraint, his scorn of conduct. (403)

Kurtz, who so notoriously lacks restraint in much the same way, began his career in the Congo with a similar faith in the pen. The author of the article concludes that Rimbaud did not find his true career until he abandoned poetry for a life in Africa, at which point he reveals himself to be every bit as practical as Marlow: "His demand for books is incessant; but it is practical science, not literature, which engrosses him. He is curious concerning tanneries and artesian wells; he orders treatises upon masonry, mineralogy, and naval architecture" (408). In this quest for efficiency, Rimbaud is not, apparently, typical of his nation. The writer considers him "more richly gifted in the art of colonisation than any of his contemporaries" (408). He is not, like Conrad's French and Belgians, simply intent on "the merry dance of death and trade" (204); Rimbaud "was determined to take civilisation wherever he found profit" (408)—hence his demand for practical books. Unlike Kurtz, he sees civilization in practical terms rather than through high-flown rhetoric. The article implies that responsible imperialism does not loot the colony but develops its infrastructure. "Had France many sons as heroic as Rimbaud," we are told, "she would not be compelled to deplore her policy wherever she unfurls her flag" (408). And this judgment is not the mere prejudice of an Englishman. Rimbaud himself is quoted on French imperial practice:

> "I believe," said he, "that no country has so stupid a colonial policy as France. If England makes mistakes and incurs expenses, at least she has serious interests and an important outlook. But no power ever knew so well as France how to squander its strength and money for pure loss, and in impossible regions." (409)

Such a view is entirely concurrent with Marlow's tone regarding his cruise along the coasts of French Africa.

Part 2 of "The Heart of Darkness" begins with Marlow's overhearing the manager of the Central Station and his uncle talking about Kurtz, and it then takes us up the river to the Inner Station and the Harlequin. The same issue (March) ends with "An Unwritten Chapter of History: The Struggle for Borgu," an article about "French aggressions on the territories claimed by us in West Africa, and of our too-long-deferred resistance to those aggressions" (605). We learn something of British ideas about French imperial methods. The French Lieutenant Bretonnet is surrounded by hostile African warriors:

> After a severe fight he succeeded in routing them, and the country was terrorised into submission. . . . The Baribas were thoroughly cowed; they hated, but they were afraid. It was very different from the method in which we make war against the savages, sending large expeditions and paying fair or even at times excessive prices for such goods as the natives choose to supply. (611)

While the French, we are assured, "devastated the country" (614), the English did "as English officers always do, their best to make themselves happy and live at peace with their neighbours" (616).[9] When informed of the convention signed at Paris on July 14, 1898, which requires them to abandon some of the territory they have taken, the French, the writer tells us, are "very bitter: they said that France had once more been humiliated by England, and all the other things that French officers are accustomed to say in such circumstances" (617). We are to understand that France has been so often humiliated by England that its officers have evolved an entire set of bitter—and predictable—remarks. They are not even allowed originality in their spleen. Between Conrad, this article, the Rimbaud article, and the Looker-on, the French emerge as farcical incompetents and contemptible bullies.

"Push and enterprise"

While "The Heart of Darkness" presents a case study of how badly French-speaking people do imperialism, an article by the very British Ian Malcolm in the February issue, "Jamaica: An Impression," offers a positive British alternative. The treatment of native Africans by the Company—the grove of death (206–07) at the Outer Station and the beating of a native after the conflagration of a store hut at the Central Station (213)—contrasts with what Ian Malcolm sees at Knockalva, Jamaica, an estate where his brother is subagent:

> And amid all this natural profusion live the negroes in their little log-huts, or, if in humbler circumstances, in bothies built

> of leaves and grass. They all seemed to be busy with something or another. At the doors the women were sewing or men were cobbling; here, a little darkey girl combing out her sister's hair under a great Poinsettia-tree, whose red leaves burned brilliant in the sun; there little picaninnies in a state of nature chasing chickens and pigs; now, where a stream crosses the road, groups of girls washing linen with their sleeves rolled well over their elbows, and their skirts well up to their knees; and all along the road we passed men driving cattle or mule-trains laden with produce to the nearest market. From each and all we were certain of a "Marnin', massa." (310–11)

The vision is unstintingly idyllic: the adults are represented at worthy labor and the children at play, there are signs of plenty in the "laden" mule trains, and they all know their place without having it beaten into them—that education, no doubt, took place long ago when their ancestors were first brought from Africa. After an early start, the workers take their dinner between 11 and 11:30. Unlike the Italians and Spaniards, who, we are told, idle away the early afternoon in siesta, the Jamaicans get straight back to work and labor "cheerfully" until 5 o'clock (310).

The *Blackwood's* reader of the February number could take satisfaction in contemplating what the White Man can achieve with natives when the White Man happens to be British rather than Belgian or French. However, such satisfaction should be cautious. Ian Malcolm is no mindless booster: early in the article, during the course of his rail journey from Kingston to Knockalva, he chatted with a number of passengers about the state of the island. They acknowledge that poverty exists and "blame was heaped on everything except the lethargy and want of push and enterprise which seem to me responsible for much of the existing stagnation and depression" (305). But after this gloomy opening things begin to look up, and before reaching Knockalva, the author describes the estate of Mr. Ellis, where the proprietor, along with two Swiss and a German, is experimenting with banana drying, among other things. These men, who "do not let the grass grow under their feet" (306), are clearly all push and enterprise.

While Malcolm represents Knockalva as a place where the hardworking hands have great fun chasing the cattle for branding, he wants to suggest an element of the Scottish Highlands transplanted to the tropics with the added value of semifeudal tradition. The estate

> has been in the possession of the Malcolms for many, many generations: far back into the remote slavery days the record goes to show the forbears of the present employees working for the ancestors of the present owner; whilst a clannish tradition binds master and man as loyally together to-day in this distant island as ever it did in the Highlands of Scotland. (306)

By 1899, the clannish tradition that caused the London government so much trouble in the eighteenth century had been broken up and redirected into the Highland regiments so feared by Britain's imperial enemies. Clans, tartans, and Highlands, with the help of the Queen herself, had become utterly British and quite fashionable. The Scottish lairds became organs of English imperial sway in the Highlands, so it is not such a stretch for Malcolm to move one of them lock, stock, and cultural barrel to Jamaica. The Malcolms have been presiding in benevolent paternalism over their estate long enough to be old gentry, so the reader may contrast them and their subagent (presumably kin of some sort) with Conrad's Romans, who were "no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze, and for that you want only brute force," or to the Romans' Latin descendents—the hollow denizens of the Central Station. These last are like the unsatisfactory fellow travelers in Jamaica who lack push and enterprise. "They intrigued and slandered and hated each other . . ." Marlow tells us, "but as to effectively lifting a little finger—oh, no" (214). At the very end of the first installment of "The Heart of Darkness" the Eldorado Exploring Expedition arrives: "There was not an atom of foresight or of serious intention in the whole batch of them, and they did not seem aware these things are wanted for the work of the world" (220). In Jamaica or, at all events, in the more select parts, the real work of the world, we are to believe, goes on under British rule.

Although *Blackwood's* readers would be able to congratulate themselves that Conrad's Africa is not British Africa, there are ominous notes sounded in the magazine, admonitions that might allow "The Heart of Darkness" to be read as a warning to "us." The February number contains a piece called "From the New Gibbon," a pastiche of Edward Gibbon's description of Rome at the time of the Antonines—at the height of its power but already showing symptoms of decline. The article is unsigned, so we may take it to represent the views of the editor.[10] The writer perceives a serious decline from the earlier imperialism of Palmerston and Disraeli to the decadence of Joseph Chamberlain: "He became the high-priest of what was fondly saluted as the new Imperialism, on the lips of whose votaries British Empire was synonymous with British commerce" (243). The feckless pilgrims of Conrad's narrative are a warning of where that type of colonialism could lead. And in Britain, this writer observes, the spread of urban industrialism has led to a physical and moral debilitation such that the British are not effective traders anymore. They have become essentially spectators, using mercenaries of the empire to fight their wars and paid athletes to play their sports for them. Like Marlow, the writer cites the time of "Drake and Hawkins" as a "manlier age" (243); Conrad's narrator called the men of that time "messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire" (194). The falling away, the New Gibbon relates, has also affected the culture of letters, and in spite of a huge growth in literacy and a corresponding increase in the volume of published writing, the age has produced not one writer of "original genius" or one "who excelled in the arts of elegant composition" (248). Vulgarity, mediocrity, and cheapness sweep all before them. It is hard to know just how seriously to take all this High Tory snobbism—the piece is, after all, pastiche. The idea that the spread of education had led to the vulgarization of taste was voiced in the February "Noctes Ambrosianae" (184) and is repeated in an article called "The Sins of Education" in the March number (503–13). The importance of active participation in sports, as opposed to spectatorship, is emphasized in "Physical Education in Schools" (573–80), so we can take much of it seriously. A marked tendency to find a sad falling off in the present is the mark of a conservative.

But the Tory—Christopher North, for example—also considered himself a mature realist, in contrast to hysterical radicals, who will only learn moderation "by the lessons of experience" (172). Accordingly, the *Blackwood's* reader would acknowledge that even Englishmen, when far from the restraints of civilization, might conceivably fail to behave as a white man should. And the same number of *Blackwood's* that brought forth the final part of "The Heart of Darkness" includes an essay about William Hodson, an Englishman who was accused of such a falling off. Kurtz is, of course, only one quarter English. "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz" (497), observes Marlow. But for a purebred Englishman to behave so? Surely not. And indeed, the article is a spirited defense of Hodson, finally arguing that if he sinned, it was in the pursuit of his imperial duty.

William Hodson died in India in 1858, a year that all *Blackwood's* readers would think of as the year of the suppression of the Indian "Mutiny." Hodson was a contemporary at Rugby of Tom Hughes, creator of Tom Brown, and the writer hopes some of Tom Brown's glamour might settle on the shoulders of his subject, so he repeats the "legend" that Harry East, Tom Brown's closest friend, was modeled on Hodson. "In moral qualities, however," Harry East "is not the equal of Hodson."

Not everyone has the same elevated view of Hodson's character. He has his detractors, and a particularly damaging and widespread charge was that while in command of the Guide Corps in India, Hodson embezzled from the accounts. Even though he was eventually cleared of all wrongdoing and the finding of the initial inquiry overturned, the stigma remained with Hodson to the end of his days.

The writer acknowledges Hodson's guilt on another charge: that "he falsely accused and wrongfully imprisoned a border chief in the Mardan district" (527), one Bisharat Ali. The faults in this case, which led him to his "ruin," are listed as "positiveness, self-will, an aptness to arrogate too much." Such faults could equally be summed up as the virtue of initiative, and the writer would hardly need to point out that they are qualities of most of the world's successful military leaders. Hodson's faults, if "unrestrained, are sufficient to render a man unfit to administer the affairs of an Indian district" (527). Is there not a hint of dismissal here, implying that the administration of mere Indian districts is best left to little men, petty bureaucrats who faithfully and unimaginatively follow the letter of the law? Grander qualities are needed, we might infer, of those who build empires and defend them in their hours of peril.

The writer spends a scant column on the Mardan incident, whereas he devotes more than six to the false accusation of embezzlement. This is necessary because fiddling the regimental books is clearly the action of a bounder and a cad, and shows an unheroic, Chamberlain-like concern for money. It is a small-minded crime that benefits no one other than the perpetrator. Imprisoning an Indian border chief, on the other hand, could be represented as for the good of the empire.

When the native soldiers rebelled against their British masters in what the British called the "mutiny," the writer is able to show Hodson's faults as positive qualities. Various acts of derring-do are recounted, the whole reaching its climax in Hodson's 80-mile ride from Colonel Seaton's camp to the headquarters of the commander-in-chief and back. But before this happened, we hear of another example of Hodson's tendency to arrogate. He had taken captive "three native princes, whom common report at the time declared to have been foremost in instigating the terrible massacres which had marked the outbreak of the mutiny at Delhi" (534). Blocked in a narrow passage and pressed on from behind by a crowd of the princes' supporters, Hodson shot his three prisoners "with his own hand" (535). Not surprisingly, his action generated some controversy. The writer feels compelled to exonerate his subject, and his approach is interesting: "No impartial person will deny that the princes who were shot by him deserved death," he declares, and then acknowledges that the act did Hodson's reputation no good at all. "But, as in the case of Bisharat Ali, so here, no personal feelings would prevent him from doing unflinchingly what he regarded as his duty" (535). The writer is implicitly clearing Hodson of both crimes by showing that he was fulfilling his duty. If this is true, Hodson can hardly have felt that duty as being to any notion of due process, and, we are assured, "the vast majority of Hodson's countrymen, both then and now," applaud him for it. One cannot help but wonder why it is necessary to defend the memory of one who has such overwhelming support.

The end of Hodson's life is entirely satisfactory for the writer's rhetorical needs: he died of wounds received in the assault on the Begum Khoti palace, near Lucknow. He was laid low "by some of the enemy concealed in a room in the palace" (538)—only a group of men, hiding in a cowardly fashion, could have given the death blow to such a man! His last words have apparently been preserved: "It is hard to leave the world just now, when success is so near; but God's will be done. Bear witness for me that I have tried to do my duty to man" (538). That a man will give up his life for his duty—and only a terminally cynical reader, we may be sure, would doubt such a claim made at the point of death—is proof that his earlier questionable judgments were indeed made in good faith. Furthermore, Hodson has fulfilled his duty not only to the empire but to mankind in general. Rather conveniently, the interests of "man" coincide with those of the British empire and exclude the interests of those Indians whose death Hodson had seen to.

The Hodson story would bring out the lesson of Conrad's narrative. Hodson's self-interested embezzlement parallels Kurtz's ivory raids, but Hodson, we are told, was not guilty, whereas Kurtz is. Hodson's imprisonment of Bisharat Ali could well be read as justified *post facto* because the

Indians shortly thereafter "mutinied," and the writer carefully justifies the killing of the three princes. In short, Hodson is justified as having acted against the Indians with the greater good in mind, whereas Kurtz's excesses are purely for his own benefit. Finally, Kurtz's judgment of it all—"The horror! the horror!"—contrasts with Hodson's last words—"I have tried to do my duty to man." Marlow himself has taught us that the Work is what matters and Work is what characterizes British imperialism, so Hodson's devotion to his duty, to the success of the military campaign of which he is a part, shows him to be of the British Party of Work. And just in case we have any doubts about our man, the writer leaves us with a description of his appearance taken from a pencil drawing made shortly before he left England for India: "clean-cut features and strong chin, . . . pale yellow hair, steel-blue eyes and fresh complexion" (539). It is a familiar ideal. The only other likeness is a photograph taken shortly before his death. The hair has grown thin at the temples, the "firm mouth" is hidden behind a very long moustache, and the eyes have developed "a sternness engendered by twelve years of danger and hard work" (539).

The reader who remembers the first part of "The Heart of Darkness" will know what to make of Hodson. Like Marlow, he could say, "I've had to strike and to fend off. I've had to resist and to attack sometimes—that's only one way of resisting—without counting the exact cost, according to the demands of such sort of life as I had blundered into" (205). Perhaps Hodson went too far, the reader might concede. But finally he was faithful to "the idea," the idea of empire, to quote Marlow again: "an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to. . . ." In Hodson's case, the reader murmurs, the sacrifice was his own life. Another reader, on the other hand, could argue that Hodson was little better than a murderer and was probably "not straight about money" (530). But such a reader would not be reading the rest of *Blackwood's* with much pleasure.

The April Looker-on claims that "Though not actually at war, we are in a state of war—a state of war that may not be unfairly illustrated by the case of a nation called upon to keep a costly army in the field, very far from home, to hold in check a force mustering for invasion" (762). The Looker-on acknowledges that "the war-charge of today is almost entirely devoted to the defence and acquisition of trade—the means of living. It is to seize markets, fill workshops and factories, that all the world's at strife" (763). Markets and imperial strife preoccupy a significant proportion of the articles and reviews that accompany "The Heart of Darkness," and taken together, they clearly align the text as a whole with a militant proimperial and anti-French attitude, for in early 1899, France was *the* enemy. Conrad represents the Belgian colonization of the Congo as not so much a moral outrage as a clear case of Continental inefficiency. Furthermore, the various accounts of French incompetence and reminders of their ultimate failure in the Napoleonic wars tell the reader how very beatable France would be.

Marlow's audience on the *Nellie,* the Director of Companies, the Lawyer, the Accountant, and the Narrator, are, with the exception of the last, notably silent—a sigh, a grunt, and a demand that Marlow be civil is the extent of their contribution. But theirs is the voice of *Blackwood's,* and it is heard clearly everywhere else in the magazine. *Blackwood's* projected itself as weighty, considered, and above all realistic. The empire was a complex matter, and a keen eye was essential to keep it working well, so there was a place for criticism. "The Heart of Darkness" acknowledges the complexities of the imperial project, of human imperfections, and of the consequent dangers of being beyond the reins of civilized life. In doing so, it is fully a part of the moral and political discourse of *Blackwood's,* whose basic rule is that good imperialists are British and bad imperialists are not. Conrad is faithful to this discourse in that while he shows negative examples of imperialism, his exemplars are never British. A few months later, the story of Jim began in *Blackwood's,* and we are presented with a young Englishman who betrays the code, but like Hodson, he redeems himself in a final act of self-sacrifice.

Notes

1. The title did not lose the definite article until the text was republished in book form. I will use the definite article when referring to it in its *Blackwood's* context.

2. It is likely that Conrad continued to study *Blackwood's.* Between 1899 and 1907, the magazine published four long editorials on the subject of anarchists with reference to the theories of the celebrated criminologist Cesare Lombroso, and John E. Saveson offers convincing evidence that even if Conrad read Lombroso for himself, *Blackwood's* was an important source for his representation of anarchists in *The Secret Agent*. Thus, writes Saveson, "Conrad's attitudes toward anarchists and toward the prevailing criminology were conventional" and in accord with those of *Blackwood's* (57).

3. Other magazines where Conrad published had rather wider circulation. James Tye reports that at this period the *Cornhill* sold about 8,000 copies, the *Pall Mall* some 35,000 to 40,000, and the *Strand*'s circulation in 1899 was more than 300,000 in England alone (72–73). *Blackwood's* may not have sold many copies, but Tye's research shows that of the leading periodicals of 1895, none were as widely subscribed to by the leading gentlemen's clubs as Maga. So it seems reasonable to conclude that the rich and influential read it and that like a library copy, one subscription would account for far more than one reader.

4. I do not wish to imply that I think Said wrong-headed in this reading; in fact, there is even evidence that Conrad consciously held such views.

5. Even scholars who finally find fault with the story tend to be forgiving in the process. Benita Parry judges it to be "a militant denunciation and a reluctant affirmation of imperialist civilization" (39).

6. Seven literary pieces accompanied "The Heart of Darkness" through its three issues of *Blackwood's.* In February there was "A Daughter of the Muhammadans," by Hugh Clifford; "The Gift of Fulfilment: An Allegory," by Beatrice Harraden; "Tante Lotje," anonymous; "Madonna of the Peach-Tree," by Maurice Hewlett; "Autobiography of a Child," anonymous (this serialization had started in late 1898); and "The Sword of Corporal Lacoste," by Bernard Capes. The March number included no literature other than Conrad's continuing story and the next part of "The Autobiography of a Child." Both narratives concluded in April, which also saw the beginning of a new serialization, "Like to Like: A Trivial Romance," by G. S. Street. "A Daughter of the Muhammadans" shows British colonial practice in a humane light, and "Tante Lotje" is neutral on the Dutch. "Like to Like" features a ne'er do well who returns from Australia after a brief attempt to mend his fortunes.

7. He had finally retired in 1894 and died four years later, but he was still very much a presence and is discussed in the pages of *Blackwood's* on three separate occasions between February and April. Gladstone was noted for his moral enthusiasms, but the Looker-on quotes Mr. Lecky's recent biography with approval: "There is such a thing as an honest man with a dishonest mind" (440). However, this is not damning enough, so the Looker-on recounts a story he heard from a sculptor called Boehm that might be about Count Dracula. It concerns the prime minister's eyes, which appear to have been hawklike. Gladstone was intent on putting down a Scotch professor called Blackie,

> who, knuckling the table as he rose to speak, had only got as far in what he had to say as "Mr Gladstone, if there is one thing—" when his tongue stumbled and he sank back into his chair in confusion. Again I

> looked to Mr Gladstone, and understood. The inner lids (here Boehm held two fingers of one hand upright and parted them) the inner lids were opened on Blackie, and he had looked into the Pit. (442)

That Gladstone needs to be so markedly demonized shows how dangerous and morally dishonest *Blackwood's* regarded Liberalism to be.

8. Christie's English people were not alone in their confusion. In "After the Race" (first published in *The Irish Homestead* in 1904), James Joyce represents a Belgian as almost a Frenchman:

> The cars came scudding in towards Dublin, . . . Now and again the clumps of people raised the cheer of the gratefully oppressed. Their sympathy, however, was for the blue cars—the cars of their friends, the French.
>
> The French, moreover, were virtual victors. Their team had finished solidly; they had been placed second and third and the driver of the winning German car was reported to be a Belgian. (42)

9. The benignity of British imperial rule is further highlighted in Hugh Clifford's story "A Daughter of the Muhammadans" in the February number. Here a kindly colonial official in Malaya is able to assure the protagonist of the story that she will not have to abandon her crippled husband to a leper colony (262).

10. James Tye observes that *Blackwood's* preserved the practice of anonymous contributions (23). Unlike most editors, William Blackwood would provide the author's name if there was material with which he disagreed, whereas anonymity implied full approval (124). Tye is presumably referring to articles, since not all the fiction is signed. Conrad's fiction always carries a byline, but Blackwood would hardly have granted so much space to an author whose views he found disagreeable.

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T. S. Eliot's Etherized Patient

Anthony Cuda

> [T]hese things may seem to you delusions, or truisms; but for me they are dark truths, and the power to put them into even such words as these has been given me by an ether dream.
>
> —"manuscript by a friend in England"
> qtd. in William James (309)

When T. S. Eliot wrote from his sickbed to his friend (and printer of the *Criterion)* Richard Cobden-Sanderson in September 1925, it was amid some of his most trying days since his arrival in London 10 years before. Since July he had been anxiously preparing for his upcoming Clark Lectures at Trinity College, and by September he was not only finalizing his next volume, *Poems 1909–1925,* for its upcoming publication in November but also assuming the editorship at Faber and Gwyer, a position he would occupy for the rest of his professional career. Over the summer he had watched his wife Vivienne sink rapidly into a state of virtual paralysis from pain and exhaustion, but amid the flurry of his own physical and intellectual activity, the last thing Eliot could have expected was to be himself, in his own words from a decade before, "etherised upon a table" (*Complete Poems and Plays* [*CPP*] 3). However, when he arrived at the doctor's office for an ostensibly minor operation on his jaw, he was startled to find a swarm of medical attendants, two dentists, a surgeon, and one particularly conspicuous anesthesiologist who administered ether to him at the outset of a procedure that lasted over an hour. The unexpected operation at the hands of these "masked actors," as he would later call them (*CPP* 307), brought his activity to an abrupt halt, and the sardonic, jocular tone of his letter to Cobden-Sanderson, scrawled in pencil and with an uncharacteristically shaky hand shortly after his operation, does not quite successfully conceal its disquieting effects on him (Letter). In the letter, Eliot vividly describes the disturbing aftereffects of the anesthetic and apologizes for the various delays and uncertainties over the future of the *Criterion*. He concludes by suggesting that perhaps things might have been better for everyone if he had not revived from the ether at all.

However serious this dark suggestion may have been, the operation likely compelled him to reexamine the proper role and value of the soul's passive aspects (for example, its potential to be moved or harmed, to receive and suffer rather than give and act) and to consider the merit of what he would eventually call the "immense passive strength" that alone promises spiritual freedom (*Selected Essays* [*SE*] 423). When can the body afford to surrender its defenses, or the intellect to suspend its active vigilance? Eliot would later search for answers to these questions in the mysticism of Richard of St. Victor and John of the Cross, but the questions reflect not only theology but also emotional turmoil, not only a desire to reach God but also his attempts to grapple with fear, vulnerability, and helplessness in his earliest poetry.[1] In "Prufrock" and the early poems included in *Inventions of the March Hare,* he begins to experiment with physical paralysis as a correlative to the spiritual condition of vulnerability and helplessness. But the tension underlying these experiments comes to a head when, in his early literary criticism, he addresses passivity as an essential but dangerous element of the poet's vocation. In the pages of the *Criterion* and elsewhere, Eliot and his circle undertook a scathing critique of "intuition" and the "inner voice," concepts that privilege passivity and reduce the creative process to bursts of "fitful lyric inspiration," thereby denying the active, rational mind of the craftsman its rightful place.[2] Quoting Paul Valéry, Eliot maintains that the poet must be neither an automaton nor a madman but a "cool scientist, almost an algebraist, in the service of a subtle dreamer" (Introduction, *Art of Poetry*). But he also suggests that poets must cultivate "a kind of sense, a receptive medium" and that in all great poetry "there is always a hint of something behind, something impersonal, something in relation to which the author has been no more than the passive (if not always pure) medium" ("Commentary" Oct. 1932, 77).[3] From his earliest work, he is torn between the dangers that passivity poses and the possibilities it promises, both for the craft of poetry and the life of the spirit.

This essay examines the changing ways in which Eliot envisions physical and spiritual passivity and the tremendous pressure that his inquiry into paralysis and surrender exerts on his understanding of the human soul. It brings evidence from his unpublished letter to Cobden-Sanderson and from a number of his uncollected essays and reviews to bear upon his repeated representations of an external experience that exhibits what he calls an "exact nightmare correspondence to some spiritual terror" (Introduction, *Choice* 20n).[4] The striking changes in the way he represents the etherized patient are indicative of parallel changes in his thinking about the soul, and his later versions of the trope offer him a way to reconcile his artistic reservations about passivity with his spiritual ideals of surrender. Between its early appearances in "Prufrock" and *Inventions of the March Hare* and its return over 20 years later in *East Coker* (1940), the image of an etherized patient is transformed from a temporary obstacle to a necessary element of the soul's spiritual path.

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Eliot had begun to make human weakness and affliction the subjects of his verse long before his emotional and physical "breakdown" in the winter of 1921, but his convalescence at Margate and afterward in Lausanne afforded him the opportunity to think about passive suffering in a much more urgent, personal light. In the "London Letter" he wrote on his return to London, he applauds one of his literary mentors for recognizing the potential for human weakness to become an asset to the artistic vocation:

> Dostoevsky had the gift, a sign of genius in itself, for utilizing his weaknesses; so that [they] . . . cease to be the defects of an individual and become—as a fundamental weakness can, given the ability to face it and study it—the entrance to a genuine and personal universe. (331)

Not long after he had been forced to face and study his own particular weaknesses as never before, Eliot rediscovered in Dostoyevsky the possibility of transforming his own afflictions into spiritual and literary insight. In his eyes, Dostoevsky's novels address not merely the unique sickness of the individual but the fundamental weakness underlying all that we conventionally consider to be healthy and self-sufficient. The prolonged scrutiny of one's own fears and weaknesses, Eliot learns, opens a window onto the soul's inner world and offers a way to distinguish between its essential attributes and the accidental ones, clouded by what he later calls "[u]ndisciplined squads of emotion" (*CPP* 128). Eliot came to believe that vulnerability and passivity pertain to neither the body nor the mind exclusively but to the human soul as the formal and living principle of both. But when he turned to the etherized patient in his earliest poetry as a figure for both spiritual and physical passivity, it was already an attempt to address the nature of the soul itself and to distinguish between the elements of it that originate action and those that are, whether by volition or violence, acted upon. Eliot did not need to wait until his "breakdown" in 1921 or his surgical operation in 1927 to reach these conclusions; over a decade before his "London Letter" he had already begun to anticipate Dostoevsky's gift for "utilizing" weakness by studying the horrors of vulnerability, facing this particularly frightening embodiment of human weakness by experimenting with metaphors for paralysis and scenarios of passive suffering.

In Eliot's phantasmagoria, the predecessor to the etherized patient is the marionette, and both *Poems Written in Early Youth* and *Inventions of the March Hare* include a variety of poems that adopt the uncanny puppet as a figure for various states of passivity and helplessness. For instance, behind the marionette's sentimental exclamation in "Convictions (Curtain Raiser)"—"Where shall I ever find the man! / . . . / I'd give my life to his control" (*Inventions* 11)—is Eliot's youthful sneer at the absurdity of a puppet's desire to abandon the control that, of course, it never actually possesses. Questions of self-control—and the doubts and fears associated with relinquishing it—assume a singular urgency in Eliot's early poems. The marionette returns in "Humouresque," and the speaker of "Goldfish (Essence of Summer Magazines)" mocks the absurdity of a puppet that has surrendered its "will" to a human vice: "Like the cigarettes / Of our marionettes / Inconsequent, intolerable" (*Inventions* 26). If the wooden figure of the marionette becomes a vehicle for Eliot's earliest doubts about self-possession and control, it also offers the young poet a correlative to the sensation of helplessness, the acute awareness of being manipulated by the hand of a hidden puppeteer whose will is repetitive and ultimately mysterious. After "all the reminiscent tunes" of the marionettes' monotonous waltz have ended, "What answer?" he inquires of a "tired Sphinx": "We cannot discern" (26).

By the time Eliot publishes "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1917), his various figures for passivity have crystallized into a conceit that betrays the single most important aspect of Prufrock's haunted psyche. "Let us go then," he famously begins,

> you and I,
> When the evening is spread out against the sky
> Like a patient etherised upon a table (*CPP* 3)

If the tragedy of the poem consists in Prufrock's fear of and failure to risk vulnerability, these lines configure that fear with a precise correlative for paralysis. For Eliot, the etherized patient is a body whose dulled awareness remains but who cannot move to protect itself. Later in the poem Eliot experiments with other metaphors for helplessness, as Prufrock envisions himself "formulated, sprawling on a pin," or "pinned and wriggling on the wall" (5). In "Portrait of a Lady" (1917) he replaces etherized paralysis with a less menacing "tobacco trance," a drowsed mental state with consequences as meaningless as those that befell the marionettes: "dance, dance / Like a dancing bear, / Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape. / Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance—" (*CPP* 11). Eliot's training in classical philosophy had taught him that rational consciousness is the faculty that distinguishes humans from animals; his "intolerable" marionettes and chattering apes affirm that when the will is paralyzed and passive, the human becomes animal. Puppets and parrots aside, the paralyzed patient remains Eliot's most succinct correlative to the sensation of helplessness, and he returns to pun on it again in "The Burnt Dancer" when the speaker imagines himself a "patient acolyte of pain, / . . . / Caught on those horns that toss and toss" (*Inventions* 63). Eliot's pun—and his use of other "patients" in the early poems—rests on his knowledge that the word *patient* both pertains to patience in the modern sense and is also etymologically linked with passivity. In his reading of scholastic theology, he would have found the patient (*patiens*) differentiated from the agent (*agens*), as the entity that is acted on differs from the originator of the action.[5] It is the nature of the patient to suffer movement inflicted on it by an agent, but this movement need not always induce fear. For instance, one may be pulled from the path of a moving train or pushed onto its tracks. The emotional turbulence that Eliot's personae experience—their oscillation between relief and terror—arises not necessarily from the nature of the action that the patient suffers but from the vulnerability and helplessness that he endures.

Eliot returns to this ambivalence in "The Death of Saint Narcissus" and "The Love Song of St. Sebastian," both of whose speakers reveal a terror of, but compelling attraction to, passive suffering. However, unlike Eliot's beloved Arnaut Daniel in the *Purgatorio,* these early personae demonstrate none of the purgatorial virtues that result from choosing passivity; they fear paralysis, and their fear produces a craving for relief, which results in an ambivalence that only paralyzes them further. In his essay on Eliot, Ted Hughes agrees that Saint Narcissus, with other early personae, "shares that curious neurasthenic self-awareness of himself as a thing, a puppet on strings" (281). But Eliot eventually leaves puppetry behind, grows impatient with his "insufferable" marionettes, and returns to the image of paralysis in an untitled lyric ("Do I know how I feel?"), when the speaker foresees a grotesque scene of his own dismemberment:

> There will be a smell of creolin and the sound of something that
>   drips
> A black bag with a pointed beard and tobacco on his breath
> With chemicals and a knife
> Will investigate the cause of death that was also the cause of the
>   life—
> Would there be a little whisper in the brain
> A new assertion of the ancient pain
> Or would this other touch the secret which I cannot find?
> ....
> There will be a blinding light and a little laughter
> And the sinking blackness of ether
> I do not know what, after, and I do not care either
>   (*Inventions* 80)

Eliot imagines the Mephistophelean surgeon's approach with metonymic swiftness; in his panic, the speaker notes only a few salient, threatening details—black bag, chemicals, knife—before hurrying on toward an overwhelming question: would this operation only confirm his fears by bringing the shameful evidence of his internal corruption and decay ("the ancient pain") into the light? Or might the seemingly horrific experience have some other, self-revelatory effect? Not unlike Prufrock, the speaker proves unable to follow the question through to an answer. The poem dramatizes his fear by dismissing the scenario at the moment of the malevolent surgeon's approach, refusing to entertain the outcome of the imagined operation.[6] This version of the etherized patient evokes the same fear of helplessness that was embodied less poignantly in the marionettes, a fear that remains central to Eliot's sensibility even into *The Waste Land,* when the thunder diagnoses the soul's disorder as a fear of submission, as having resisted the "awful daring of a moment's surrender" (*CPP* 49). These early personae can only tremble at the thought of such "daring," and their attraction to passive suffering results not from a desire for self-transcendence but from a yearning for their own dissolution. They exemplify what Eliot would later call the "tendency to collapse, the recurring human desire to escape the burden of life and thought" ("Literature" 288).

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Eliot's ambivalence toward control and surrender repeatedly drew him to other thinkers who sought to uncover moral and spiritual meaning in vulnerability, paralysis, and human suffering. Studying the work of William James as a philosophy student at Harvard, he found accounts of ether-induced states of altered consciousness, or "anesthetic revelations," and what one of James's acquaintances (who had experienced an anesthetic revelation) calls "the passivity of genius, how it is essentially instrumental and defenseless, moved, not moving" (qtd. in James 309).[7] Eliot also turned to Edgar Allan Poe, whom he considered another master of suffering and vulnerability. Rereading Poe in preparation for a review of Hervey Allen's *Israfel* in 1927 would have led him back to "The Premature Burial," in which Poe's narrator intensely fears the possibility of his own mistaken interment, especially because he is afflicted with a nervous condition called "catalepsy," which leaves its victim in a paralyzed state that bears a striking resemblance to the scenes from Eliot's own early poetry. The sufferer of a cataleptic swoon, the narrator describes, remains in a state of "semi-syncope, or half swoon . . . without pain, without ability to stir, or, strictly speaking, to think, but with a dull lethargic consciousness of life and of the presence of those who surrounded my bed" (2: 268).[8] Poe's narrator suggests that such dark fantasies of helplessness give our world "the semblance of a Hell" (2: 278), but for Eliot, the hell that the etherized patient must endure is neither a mere semblance nor a passing torment but a revelation of a fundamental aspect of the human soul, of something permanent within its inscrutable depths that remains always "simple, terrible and unknown" ("Beyle" 393). When he wrote the introduction for Christopher Isherwood's translation of Baudelaire's journals in 1930, Eliot applauded another master of pain and affliction for cultivating an "immense passive strength" to endure suffering, and he must have been intrigued to read Baudelaire's description of love as "an application of torture or a surgical operation . . . in which one of the players must forfeit possession of himself" (23–24).[9] Beneath Baudelaire's distinctive analogy and his insistent scrutiny of suffering, Eliot claims, is "the possibility of a positive state of beatitude" (*SE* 423). His sustained tutelage under James, Baudelaire, Poe, and their paralytic and tortured protagonists taught him to cultivate an imaginative capacity for the kind of weakness and suffering that not only reveals something about the soul's permanent condition but also offers a mode of spiritual transformation.

But he did not need to rely solely on the paralyzed patients of recent literary history for accounts of ether, surgical operations, or the dangers of physical passivity. His first wife Vivienne had been prescribed Hoffman's anodyne and paraldehyde to treat her nervous condition, two anesthetics that exude a strong scent of ether. Lady Ottoline Morrell recalls visiting Vivienne in her room and finding her flustered and fatigued, her breath filling the air with ether (qtd. in Seymore-Jones 474).[10] Aldous Huxley, who first met Vivienne in 1917, flatly reports: "Vivienne was an ether addict. Her face was mottled like ecchymotic spots, and the house smelled like a hospital" (qtd. in Craft 32).

Even if his wife's ether addiction actually began later than scholars suspect, Eliot himself experienced the effects of the substance firsthand as early as September 1925, when it was administered to him during the unexpected operation on his jaw. Perhaps a few years before that, when Eliot and Vivienne dined with Virginia Woolf in April 1919, Woolf chanced to tell him about her own "queer little excursion into the dark world of gas" (Woolf 240). After a dental operation less than a month before, she too had wondered what would happen if one woke from the anesthetic "to find the deity himself by one's side" instead of the attending physician (250).[11] But if he had the benefit of her warning, it did him little good. He went blithely into the office expecting to be out in 10 minutes; instead, he spent over an hour under the anesthetic, all the while with a vague awareness (he claims in his letter to Richard Cobden-Sanderson) of the surgeons chipping and scraping at his jaw. A mere two years before he would be baptized into the Anglican church, Eliot wrote to Cobden-Sanderson that he could do nothing but utter curses at God upon reviving from his drugged state and staggering into mid-afternoon London.

But aside from its physical effects and the minor blasphemy they induced, the disorienting experience had a much more permanent and jarring impression on Eliot's sensibility, as is suggested by the morbid possibility that he had clearly entertained: what if he had remained paralyzed "upon a table"? As if he were desperate to find an answer to this question in the work of his masters, the essays and reviews written after his operation repeatedly engage poets who seem to have shared his own fears of paralysis and tortured helplessness.[12] By his later work, the "sinking blackness" of ether had assumed both an acute personal resonance and an allusive literary one associated with vulnerability and the surrender of the human will. But it matters little whether the trope is a product of experience or imagination, of his own surgical operation, James's accounts of anesthetic revelations, or the macabre fantasies of Poe and Baudelaire. In Eliot's mind, it expands to encompass the many emotions and doubts involved in his attempt to reconcile the virtues of passivity to its more hidden and threatening dangers, dangers that grew only more apparent as he continued to immerse himself in Christian theology and religious doctrine.

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In 1927, Eliot pseudonymously translated "Poetry and Religion" by the French philosopher Jacques Maritain, a neo-Thomist whom he celebrates as "the leader of the Catholic rationalists" ("Idealism" 299) and "the most conspicuous figure, and probably the most powerful force, in contemporary French philosophy" ("Commentary" Jan. 1927, 3).[13] In this essay Maritain proposes a rationalist philosophy of art that allows for the role of creative intuition—which he admits is not strictly rational—but severely limits the importance of passivity in matters both spiritual and artistic. He applauds modern poets like Baudelaire and Rimbaud for allowing the passive mind to wander beyond its conventional frontiers, but his misgivings about the results assume an ominous tone that must only have intensified Eliot's own uncertainties. Poets like Baudelaire and Rimbaud "made modern art pass the frontiers of the mind," Eliot translates, "[b]ut those regions are the regions of supreme dangers; . . . it is there that the good and evil angels war with one another, and the latter disguise themselves as messengers of light" (18–19). With less-than-subtle theological allegory, Maritain's prognosis emphasizes the moral dangers of relaxing the vigilance of reason. He inveighs against any sort of mystical surrender to the impulse of the unconscious psyche, claiming that "[d]isguised as an angel of counsel, it will lead the human soul astray on false mystical paths" (22). We have seen a similar suspicion and ambivalence surface in Eliot's own work, and it apparently manifested itself in his public life as well: Dorothy Pound recalls feeling that he was always "wrestling with a devil or an angel" (qtd. in Carpenter 261).[14] Eliot was gradually becoming convinced of the need for spiritual surrender, but the danger that passivity might lead the soul into depravity posed a significant challenge to the development of his aesthetic and spiritual ideals. His translation of "Poetry and Religion" concludes with a stern warning: "The demonologists know that every *passive state* in which man puts himself is a door open to the devil" (22n; italics in original).

The personae of Eliot's early poems all seem to have heeded precisely such a warning. Each one harbors the fear that he has left "a door open to the devil," and by surrendering the defenses of the active mind, has made the soul susceptible to the nightmares and impulses that originate in its hidden regions. Later, the chorus in *The Family Reunion* (1939) articulates this fear again, anxiously pleading

> to be reassured
> About the noises in the cellar
> And the window that should not have been open. (*CPP* 243)

Both Maritain's "door open to the devil" and Eliot's inadvertently opened window suggest the fear that the mansion of the soul is not safe, not entirely its own. But once again Eliot encounters the familiar tension between his spiritual and his artistic convictions: whatever crept in through the open window or the devil's door also resembles the entity that guides the artist when he experiences the sensation of "being a vehicle" in moments of heightened poetic inspiration (*SE* 405). Eliot hints that both Dante and Kipling experienced the sensation of being spoken through in a kind of literary "possession," but he is nowhere so explicit as when he suggests in "The 'Pensées' of Pascal" that the mystical inspiration that transformed Pascal into "a vehicle rather than a maker" may well have resulted from "communion with the Divine" (*SE* 405).[15] For Eliot, artistic surrender to the divine spirit and spiritual surrender to "the devil of the stairs" are dangerously similar (*CPP* 63). Stripped of their defenses either by choice or by force, body and mind are vulnerable to both physical and spiritual possession, be it possession by an angelic muse or what he explicitly calls "the *diabolic*" ("Personality" 98).

Students of Eliot's rationalism might be loath to concede his belief in spiritual possession. Admittedly, he was averse to Yeats's brand of séance and table-rapping, and he considered attempts to "[d]escribe the horoscope" and "riddle the inevitable / With playing cards" examples of the "usual / Pastimes and drugs, and features of the press" (*CPP* 135–36). But Eliot did believe in a spiritual reality behind the demonic and angelic allegories, and in "Personality and Demonic Possession" (1934) he explicitly assents to the possibility of "a positive power for evil working through human agency" (98) as well as to the danger that evil "might operate through men of genius of the most excellent character" (99).[16] He does not subscribe literally to homunculi and exorcists; rather, as he claimed of Baudelaire, Eliot himself "is concerned, not with demons, black masses, and romantic blasphemy, but with the real problem of good and evil" (*SE* 427). A year after he published "Personality and Demonic Possession," and in the same year that he first brought to the stage *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) and its demonic tempters, Eliot offered a more concrete example of the perilous proximity of passivity and evil. In "Religion and Literature," he warns against the dangers brought about by "excessive possession by any one literary personality" (*SE* 394), and he suggests that the literature we read "purely for pleasure" or with the attitude of "pure passivity" may have "the easiest and most insidious influence upon us" (396). In matters of the soul, even the seemingly innocuous activity of reading becomes morally significant; the overly passive reader is just as "helplessly exposed" as the saint or martyr to the influences of a veritable and imminent spiritual danger (398).

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In *East Coker,* Eliot attempts to negotiate a path through the various perils of passivity. His reflections there begin in the hazy shade of "the deep lane" that leads into the village of East Coker, which he visited in August 1937 during his stay at West Coker with Sir Matthew Nathan (Gardner 42). But more importantly, they begin with the sunken lane's persistent effects (the road itself "insists on the direction") on the drowsed speaker who is "in the electric heat / Hypnotised" (*CPP* 123). In the "warm haze" and "sultry light" of the afternoon, the narrator moves almost without volition, his mind slumbering with the dahlias, which "sleep in empty silence." It is this muddled state of mental and physical lethargy that prompts the meditations of *East Coker,* not the village itself or the spectral apparitions of Eliot's ancestors. The remaining sections relate the speaker's halting attempts to invest with spiritual meaning this semiconscious state, so recognizably similar to that of the etherized patient or the earlier marionette, whose tedious, repetitive movements Eliot now recaptures with less overt derision in the "daunsinge" participants of the matrimonial ceremony, with their "[f]eet rising and falling" (124).

Parts 2 and 3 sketch two contrasting versions of surrender. First, Eliot looks to his literal and literary ancestors, the "quiet-voiced elders" whose example initially seems to offer the "autumnal serenity" that ought to result from the mind's surrender of its anxious sovereignty (124). Will surrender bring, as the "wisdom of age" promises, the "long looked forward to / Long hoped for calm" (125)? For a brief moment, the narrator finds that such calm offers him a satisfactory analogue to his own dulled mental state. But he soon suspects this serenity to be merely the product of a surrender to routine and habit, what he calls a "deliberate hebetude" that is ultimately useless in the darkness of the absolute "into which they peered" or (he reconsiders) "from which they turned their eyes." The serenity of the elders only assumes the semblance of spiritual surrender; its true source is instead a surrender to fear, "fear of possession, / Of belonging to another, or to others, or to God" (125–26). In part 2, the narrator concludes that this surrender produces merely the illusion of self-control and self-possession. Refusing to dismiss the threatening, dangerous aspects of spiritual passivity in favor of an easier path, a more "secure foothold," he circles around to begin again in the ether-like shade of the sunken lane: "O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark" (126).

The narrator of part 3 revisits the state of the hypnotized traveler from the opening stanzas, following his dulled, darkened mind into the parallel darkness of the landscape, "the vacant into the vacant," and searching for analogies that will make the disorienting, trance-like experience meaningful (*CPP* 126):

> I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you
> Which shall be the darkness of God. As, in a theatre,
> The lights are extinguished, for the scene to be changed

> With a hollow rumble of wings, with a movement of darkness
>   on darkness,
>
> ....
>
> Or as, when an underground train, in the tube, stops too long
>   between stations
> And the conversation rises and slowly fades into silence
> And you see behind every face the mental emptiness deepen
> Leaving only the growing terror of nothing to think about;
> Or when, under ether, the mind is conscious but conscious of
>   nothing—
> I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope (126).

Eliot's personae have attempted in vain to follow this path "into silence" before: "Prufrock's Pervigilium" abruptly ends when the Madness opens his mouth and the world falls apart; Prufrock himself ends his "Love Song" with the silence of the sea chambers being interrupted by human voices; the narrator of "Do I know how I feel?" averts his imagination from an identical impending darkness ("I do not know what, after, and I do not care either"). They have all, like the fearful elders of part 2, "turned their eyes" from the darkness and have become prime examples of what Eliot calls "the human soul in the process of forgetting itself" ("Whether Rostrand"). This time, however, the narrator watches from within the darkened theater of the mind as the distracting illusions of self-control and mastery roll away with the scenery. In his formulations in part 3, Eliot deliberately recalls images from his earlier poems to both evoke and revise the emotional resonance they have acquired. He first returns to Prufrock's theater of the mind, but now no magic lantern casts "the nerves in patterns on a screen" (*CPP* 6), and no grotesque details of "pearls that were his eyes" (41) or "[d]affodil bulbs . . . / from the sockets of the eyes" (32) (as in *The Waste Land* and "Whispers of Immortality") divert the speaker's attention from the faces around him, behind which the spiritual vacuity deepens. In distinct contrast to the conclusion of *Ash-Wednesday* (1930), this narrator has blinded the eye that "creates / The empty forms between the ivory gates" (*CPP* 66), the fearful mental activity that deceives us with its seductive illusions: "monsters," "fancy lights," and "enchantment" (125). When he finally arrives at the familiar etherized patient, he is prepared to accept the darkness of paralysis as an analogue for "the darkness of God," and he is willing to follow the imaginative scenario through to its conclusion. Only now, after he has grappled with deep ambivalence about paralysis and surrender, does Eliot turn to the famous lines from the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* to invest his personal and emotional conclusions with the weight of the mystical tradition.

In "Do I know how I feel?" Eliot's paralyzed patient refused to entertain the possibility that the menacing surgeon might discover his shameful secret, hidden even from himself. The speaker of another early poem could only imagine with fear his own exposure and vulnerability: "We are helpless. . . . Some day, if God— / But then, what opening out of dusty souls!" (*Inventions* 49). But by the end of part 3 of *East Coker,* finally convinced that surrender might actually bring with it both "the agony" of death and the "echoed ecstasy / Not lost" of freedom, the narrator presses past the intellectual and emotional collapse that had stunted his predecessors (127). In part 4, Eliot picks up where he had left off over 20 years before by reintroducing a surgeon, this time without the malevolent characteristics that so menaced the speaker of "Do I know how I feel?":

> The wounded surgeon plies the steel
> That questions the distempered part;
> Beneath the bleeding hands we feel
> The sharp compassion of the healer's art
> Resolving the enigma of the fever chart. (127)

While it is helpful to discern the parallels between the stanzas in section 4 and André Gide's *Le Prométhée mal enchaîné,* we should not allow the hunt for allusions to divert our attention from one important fact: we have encountered this scenario before in Eliot's own work. But beyond any of Eliot's previous forays, these terse, controlled stanzas follow the imagined scenario of the etherized patient into what he calls "the dark cold and the empty desolation" (129). They add a transcendent dimension to Baudelaire's ironic description of love as a "terrible pastime, in which one of the players must forfeit possession of himself." The forfeiture of self-possession is indeed a condition for the narrator's rediscovery of Christian *caritas,* though the surrender is no less "terrible" than Eliot has previously imagined it. Under this redemptive surgeon's "constant care," the narrator discovers that surrender does not promise serenity, that passivity is not an escape from the extreme emotions that attend vulnerability; rather, it is a way of accounting for those emotions as the quiet-voiced elders could not. In contrast to the illusory self-possession that the narrator disclaimed in part 2, this is the way of dispossession, wherein the illusion of self-sufficiency and perfectibility (our "sound, substantial flesh and blood") is supplanted by an acute awareness of human limitation and vulnerability, by what Eliot calls the liberating spirit that "will not leave us, but prevents us everywhere" (128).

East Coker sees paralysis not as an obstacle but as a necessary condition of the soul's spiritual path. It contends that passivity is not merely a temporary and disabling phenomena, an "intense moment / Isolated, with no before and after," but rather a fundamental aspect of the soul, present in our most heightened moments of spiritual realization ("the evening under starlight") as well as in the mundane details of our daily experience ("the evening under lamplight . . . with the photograph album") (129). But although it revises the spiritual meaning of paralysis, *East Coker* is not a palinode of Eliot's earlier work. It neither retracts the earlier sentiments of terror and helplessness nor dismisses the apt figure of paralysis. Instead, it employs them to a different end. We might say that *East Coker* does not change the original conceit ("Like a patient etherised upon a table"), only the tonal "light" in which it is cast. Or as Harry realizes in *The Family Reunion,* the success of this transformative gesture consists not in "getting what one wanted / Or in getting rid of what can't be got rid of / But in a different vision" (*CPP* 275).

Ten years later, Eliot returns to envision the etherized patient yet once more, when in *The Cocktail Party* he delivers his final word on the trope that had compelled his early verse to nightmare. Edward, the play's protagonist, encounters a literal doctor this time in Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly, whose whimsical but profound advice promises his patient freedom from his prison of spiritual apathy and isolation (a condition that Eliot portrays in recognizably Prufrockian terms). Humility is the only escape, Harcourt-Reilly suggests, and the path to humility begins when "[y]ou're suddenly reduced to the status of an object— / A living object, but no longer a person" (307). Such an awareness reminds one of the acute vulnerability and passivity that constitute an abiding condition of the human soul, and although this condition may not always be readily apparent, it is nonetheless (as Eliot contends in a draft) "often happening; / Only, we contrive to forget about it quickly" (qtd. in Browne 191). One becomes aware of its presence—and of what Harcourt-Reilly calls the "reluctance of the body to become a *thing*" (384)—when, for instance, one misses the last step of a staircase and comes to startling "jolt" at the bottom (307). Harcourt-Reilly proposes this singular, jarring experience as the physical correlative to a spiritual reality, and his next example addresses this experience with a by-now familiar scenario:

> Or, take a surgical operation.
> In consultation with the doctor and the surgeon,
> . . . you are still the subject,
> The centre of reality. But, stretched on the table,
> You are a piece of furniture in a repair shop
> For those who surround you, the masked actors;
> All there is of you is your body
> And the "you" is withdrawn. (307)

After the conclusion that his narrator had reached in *East Coker,* Eliot can now reexamine an etherized patient with a detached, analytic tone. Harcourt-Reilly uses this familiar analogy to prescribe for his patient the voluntary withdrawal of the same "you" that Prufrock so infamously addresses ("Let us go then, you and I"), the conscious mind fearful of relinquishing its illusory control or what Eliot calls in *Ash-Wednesday* "[t]he vanished power of the usual reign" (60).

In an early draft of *The Cocktain Party,* Harcourt-Reilly's monologue continues in the draft where the final version leaves off: "We identify ourselves / With our action, and are lost when we do not act" (191). Eliot's brief explanation condenses a basic tenet of the Aristotelian psychology with which he had been familiar since his years as a philosophy student at Harvard. For Aristotle, the soul is the form or active principle of the body, its potential for both physical locomotion and the spiritual movements of the mind (555; *De Anima* 2: 412a–b. See also Aquinas 382; Ia q. 75, a. 6, corp.). If we identify ourselves with action, it is because (in the scholastic model) human beings distinguish themselves from "lower-order" entities by means of the soul, which brings to actuality the potential inherent in the body. The soul actualizes the body's potential; but what higher entity, Eliot seems to ask, actualizes the potential inherent in the soul?

Eliot's drafts repeatedly reveal his tendency to delete passages that too-explicitly address the philosophical precepts behind the poetry, and another deleted passage—this time from *Little Gidding* (1942)—hints at his answer to this philosophical question. As the draft demonstrates, Eliot had originally planned for his Virgilian guide, the "composite ghost," to propose a disabused state of awareness very similar to that which Harcourt-Reilly advocates in *The Cocktail Party:*

> the awareness of the
> fact that one was moved while
> believing oneself to be the mover (qtd. in Gardner 189)

In addition to recalling the account of "anesthetic revelation" that Eliot had encountered in William James's footnote ("the passivity of genius, how it is essentially instrumental . . . moved, not moving" [James 309]), this passage more overtly employs the Aristotelian categories of causality to address the soul's status as both an active form and a passive instrument. The soul originates the movement of the body, but all movement, including the soul's, is ultimately reducible (at least with regard to creation and origination) to the first or unmoved mover, which the scholastic theologians understood to be God. The awareness that Harcourt-Reilly conveys in the draft of *The Cocktail Party* and that Eliot describes above involves a recognition of the divine influences that operate within the human soul, moving it either without its conscious knowledge or in tandem with its own inclinations.

The temporary loss of control over the will (such as occurs during etherized paralysis), he implies, only reveals the extent to which the conscious mind is never the "centre" of its own will nor entirely in control of its own movements. Of course, Eliot never underestimates the primacy and ultimate value of the human will; he even claims that "a strong and positive misdirection of the will" is at the root of the decay of modern spirituality ("Revelation" 24). The conclusion he reaches in *Four Quartets* and *The Cocktail Party* doesn't deny the significance of the conscious mind in making decisions; rather, it demands that we attend to the unknown influences that make that freedom possible and that lend our decisions a wider, more far-reaching significance than mere isolated moments of evaluation and judgment. It demands, he claims, the sort of "hypersensitive awareness" that alone grants the individual some degree of "helpless power among the helpless" (Introduction, *Nightwood* xiii).

Eliot's conclusion is ultimately that the soul may feign surrender by relying on falsifying routines or the illusion of human perfectibility; it may simulate passivity while actually preserving its defenses under the guise of idealism or despair (we recall the devil in *Ash-Wednesday* who "wears / The deceitful face of hope and of despair" [*CPP* 63]). But only its experience as a passive object rather than a motivating agent, as the thing moved rather than the entity moving, will finally afford it a glimpse of what Archbishop Thomas Becket means by losing one's "will in the will of God" (*CPP* 199). Only when the soul refuses any "secure foothold" (125)—even the ominous certainty that "the diabolic" often offers—can it become, as Thomas maintains in *Murder in the Cathedral,* "the instrument of God" (199). It is precisely this humbling discovery of passivity before the divine movement within the soul that motivates the long monologues on martyrdom and the human will in *Murder in the Cathedral,* that stands behind Harry's escape from the psychological phantoms in *The Family Reunion,* and that even precipitates Lord Claverton's spiritual resignation in *The Elder Statesman* (1959). Each protagonist must learn, in his own way, to confront those faculties of the soul that are inscrutable and beyond his conscious control, and each must endure the risks inherent in spiritual surrender and passivity.

§

In his later essays, Eliot returns to address the persistent tension between his spiritual understanding of surrender and his ambivalence about passivity and inspiration in literary matters. His preface to Nagendranath Gangulee's *Thoughts for Meditation* advocates the "tireless activity and tireless passivity" (11) by which artists cultivate "another organ of perception" and thus an acute awareness of those "states of soul . . . beyond the limit of the visible spectrum of human feeling" (12). But despite his emphasis on the artist as a "medium" or a "vehicle," Eliot sets no store by surrealist experiments or the trend of automatic writing; he refuses to substitute submission to the unconscious "dark embryo" for the labor and craftsmanship of technique (Introduction, *Harold Monro* xiii).[17] He does, however, reserve a privileged place for the inscrutable movements of the soul that compel the poem and dictate (albeit negatively) its form. In his 1941 introduction to *A Choice of Kipling's Verse,* he describes the essential difference between "the poem which forces its way into the consciousness of the poet" and "the poem which the writer himself forces" (14). In the latter, the artist attempts to retain intellectual control over all of the various elements of the poem, conceiving his meaning, choosing appropriate figures of speech to convey it, and manipulating the sound and rhythm of the language accordingly. The poem that "forces" itself upon the poet results only from an "awful daring" (*CPP* 49) of surrender and abandon to the same mystical or divine spirit to which Eliot refers when he suggests that Dante composed "by surrender and assent" rather than by means of "a strong will" (*Varieties* 117). Just as he discerns the importance of those inscrutable spiritual forces before which the human soul is passive, so he eventually learns to value the "unknown, dark *psychic material*" that dictates the poem from within the mind (*Three Voices* 35). By the time he delivers the lecture "Scylla and Charybdis" (1952), Eliot can affirm that poets ought to limit their attention to "a better choice of words, a neater turn of phrase, and a more orderly arrangement" (5), what he calls elsewhere "the craftsman's problems" (Introduction, *Choice* 18), thereby allowing the darker, less apprehensible movements of the soul to impress themselves upon the poem. "In avoiding the several dangers of navigation," he concludes, "the poet cannot be too much concerned with the choice of the port which he hopes eventually to reach" ("Scylla" 9). It should not surprise us that, in the attempt to define surrender and passivity in a literary sense, Eliot reverts to the nautical metaphors he had employed in a similar spiritual context years earlier in "Goldfish" ("Your seamanship is very neat" [*Inventions* 29]), *The Waste Land* ("The boat responded / Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar" [*CPP* 49]), *Ash-Wednesday* ("The white sails still fly seaward" [66]), and "Marina" ("the hope, the new ships" [73]). The subtle integration of these formerly distinct tropes for spiritual surrender into an artistic paradigm is indicative of Eliot's expanded, mature understanding of the passive aspects of the soul itself and the role that they assume in the range of human experience. If in his early essays he often hints at the passivity necessary for poetic composition but quickly withdraws for fear of risking his credentials as a modern rationalist, Eliot's persistent experimentation with the figure of the etherized patient and its concomitant range of emotions eventually allows him to bring his literary ideals into accord with his spiritual understanding of surrender.

§

Late in his life, Eliot revisited the haunting work of a poet he had long admired when he delivered a radio tribute to John Davidson in the summer of 1957 and, four years later, composed the preface for Maurice Lindsay's *John Davidson: A Selection of His Poems* (1961).[18] Davidson's ability to gaze unflinchingly on the ruins and terrors of modernity, Eliot claims, "impressed me deeply in my formative years between the ages of sixteen and twenty" (i). Scholars have long discerned the influence of Davidson's attention to what he calls "agony unutterable" (Davidson 2: 328) on his earliest work, and Eliot himself reveals that the speaker of Davidson's "Thirty Bob a Week" "has haunted me all my life" (Preface, *John Davidson* ii). Another of Davidson's speakers, who seems to have had a similarly haunting effect on Eliot, relates with philosophical detachment the details of a ghastly vivisection he performed on a dying man whom he had taken into his care. "I study pain," the narrator of Davidson's "The Testament of a Vivisector" explains before dismembering the paralyzed man, "measure it and invent it" (2: 327).

If the young Eliot sensed a "fellow feeling" (Preface, *John Davidson* ii) and a dark kinship with a poet who could envision the details of dissecting a living, paralyzed body, his own mature conclusions about paralysis and passivity undoubtedly strengthened this sense when he returned to reread Davidson with renewed interest in 1957. By that time, Eliot's persistent attention to the trope of the etherized patient had taught him that vulnerability and spiritual surrender might be accompanied not only by terror but joy as well, and he would have discovered a striking affirmation of this conviction when he chanced to reread Davidson's "Insomnia." Davidson's protagonist awakens to find himself "stretched upon his living bier"—"a golden rack / Inlaid with gems"—while all around him a conspicuously familiar "ether hovered black" (1: 129). Rather than a sadistic "vivisector" or Eliot's early Mephistophelean surgeon, two seraphim attend this paralyzed patient, intent on what initially seems to be torture but what Davidson eventually reveals as a form of divine purgation: "The Seraph at his head was Agony; / Delight, more terrible, stood at his feet" (1: 129). Eliot must have looked upon the scene knowingly: a paralyzed patient, the embodiment of spiritual surrender, caught midway between agony and ecstasy but nonetheless in the constant care of the divine seraphim, whose "implacabl[e] intent" (1: 129) he undoubtedly realized to be at one with that liberating spirit he addresses in *The Family Reunion* as the "love and terror / Of what waits and wants me, and will not let me fall" (*CPP* 281). Eliot's belated encounter with Davidson's helpless patient in "Insomnia," so reminiscent of his own Prufrock but transfigured in the light of the divine, must have helped him to resolve his longstanding struggle to trace the lineaments of the passive soul. Looking back on his uncanny marionettes smoking their cigarettes, or on the malicious approach of the bearded surgeon with his chemicals and knife, perhaps Eliot eventually came to understand, as Harry puts it in *The Family Reunion,* that

> in the end
> That is the completion which at the beginning
> Would have seemed the ruin. (*CPP* 275)

Notes

1. For John of the Cross, see Eliot's remarks in *Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry* 104–05 and "Thinking in Verse." He quotes at length from the *Benjamin Major* by the twelfth-century theologian Richard of St. Victor in *Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry* 102–03. See also Smith 99 and Schuchard 176–77.

2. Eliot praises Henry Treece as "a poet of plan and construction rather than of fitful lyric inspiration" in an unpublished blurb intended for the dust wrapper of Treece's *The Exiles* (qtd. in Sackton 173). For a recent study of the intellectual debate between Eliot's *Criterion* and John Middleton Murry's *Adelphi,* see Harding. For Eliot's remarks regarding his distrust of the "inner voice" and "intuition," see "The Function of Criticism" 37 and "Mr. Read and M. Fernandez" 756.

3. See also the April 1932 "Commentary": "Man must have something to which he is ready to sacrifice himself; he must, if necessary, sacrifice himself, but he must not be sacrificed" (470). In an address to the Women's Alliance less than a year after he published "The 'Pensées' of Pascal," Eliot admitted his own utter dependence, in matters both spiritual and aesthetic, on those moments of passivity that allow the mind to crystallize, and which come but seldom and unexpectedly ("Bible"). In "The Hawthorne Aspect," he suggests that "Hawthorne and James have a kind of sense, a receptive medium, which is not of sight. . . . They perceive by antennae; and the 'deeper psychology' is here" (50–51). And in his introduction to Harold Monro's *Collected Poems,* he contends that a poet must be original and unique "only so far as is dictated . . . by the nature of that dark embryo within him which gradually takes on the form and speech of a poem" (xiii).

4. Cf. Eliot's introduction to *The Collected Poems of Harold Monro,* in which he claims that the "external world, as it appears in his poetry, is manifestly but the mirror of a darker world within" (xvi).

5. For example, see Aquinas: "Intensity of passion depends not only on the power of the agent, but also on the passibility of the patient" (723; Ia–IIae, q. 22, a. 3, ad. 2).

6. Eliot may have adopted and transposed this scene from John Davidson's "The Testament of a Vivisector," in which the narrator, who likens himself to "a pale inquisitor, / Beholding pangs of stubborn heresy / A-sweat upon the rack" (2: 327) performs a brutal surgical dissection on a paralyzed man who comes to him in a state of extreme vulnerability and weakness.

7. On one of the 60 index cards that Eliot annotated during his studies at Harvard, he transcribed James's accounts in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* of his acquaintance's ether dream and of B. P. Blood's investigation into "anesthetic revelation" (James 307). See Crawford 72–81 and Ricks's note to "Do I know how I feel? Do I know what I think?" (Eliot, *Inventions* 80).

8. Eliot reviewed Hervey Allen's biography of Poe along with an edition of Poe's stories in 1927 ("Israfel"). See also "A Dream within a Dream" and "From Poe to Valéry." For an examination of Eliot's literary debts to Poe, see Lyndall Gordon and Marion Montgomery.

9. This trope would also likely have recalled to him Baudelaire's "Some Foreign Caricaturists," an essay that Eliot probably read along with "On the Essence of Laughter" when he began to model himself in the image of the "savage comedian" in the 1920s (Schuchard 88–89). "Some Foreign Caricaturists" features a lengthy description of William Hogarth's woodcut *The Reward of Cruelty* and applauds the moral significance underlying Hogarth's ghastly depiction of a "corpse stretched out stiff and flat on a dissection table" and "the surrounding figures of all those British doctors" (187). The two essays appear in succession in a volume of Baudelaire's works that Eliot probably owned, *Oeuvres Complètes de Charles Baudelaire, Vol. 2: Curiosités Esthétiques,* edited by M. Jacques Crépet. Seven volumes of Baudelaire's *Oeuvres Complètes* were in Eliot's personal library in January 1936 (Inventory).

10. For a detailed account of Vivienne's ether addiction, see Anthony Fathman. Carol Seymore-Jones adds:

> From 1930, stories of Vivienne's bizarre behaviour were legion in literary London, many centering around her abuse of ether, then used as an anaesthetic, which could be inhaled or rubbed on the body. . . . according to his relatives, Dr. Miller, Vivienne's doctor, who practiced at 110 Harley Street, prescribed paraldehyde for her as a massaging gel, which smelt strongly of ether. (474)

11. Woolf relates that Eliot and his wife dined with her on 6 April 1919 (262). In a diary entry from a month before, she relates:

> Yesterday I had a tooth out. . . . The queer little excursion into the dark world of gas always interests me. I came home in the Tube wondering whether any of the people there suspected its existence. I wake from it, or seem rather to step out of it & leave and go on hurtling through space while the world of Harrison and Dr Trueby engages my attention—"Open your mouth, Mrs. Woolf—Now let me take out this little bit of wood." Suppose one woke instead to find the deity himself by one's side! (250)

12. For instance, see Eliot's laudatory review of L. C. Martin's essay on Nathaniel Wanley (1634–80), "Wanley and Chapman" (1925). And in his 1932 essay on John Ford, Eliot quotes this passage from *The Broken Heart:* "'tis a fine deceit / To pass away in a dream; indeed, I've slept / With mine eyes open a great while" (*SE* 199).

13. Donald Gallup attributes the translation of "Poetry and Religion" to Eliot, although it was originally credited to F. S. Flint (214).

14. "As it was, Dorothy Pound said she and Ezra always felt Eliot was 'wrestling with a devil or an angel,' which they found most uncomfortable" (Carpenter 261). Carpenter quotes from the unpublished notebooks of Neil Stock.

15. In the Clark Lectures (1926), Eliot suggests that John Donne's poems and sermons, in contrast to Dante's *Commedia,* "always give me the impression of an incomplete concentration, of a direction of forces more by a strong will than by surrender and assent" (*Varieties* 117). In "The 'Pensées' of Pascal," he identifies personally with Pascal's variety of "mystical experience," during which a

> piece of writing meditated, apparently without progress, for months or years, may suddenly take shape and word; . . . he to whom this happens assuredly has the sensation of being a vehicle rather than a maker. (*SE* 405)

And he claims that Rudyard Kipling "is not merely possessed of penetration, but almost 'possessed' of a kind of second sight" (Introduction, *Choice* 19) and that his verse betrays "something which has the true prophetic inspiration" (16).

16. "Personality and Demonic Possession," first published in the *Virginia Quarterly Review,* eventually became part 3 of *After Strange Gods.* Eliot explains that the essay is concerned with "the intrusion of the *diabolic* into modern litera-

ture" and the dynamic whereby "a positive power for evil [works] through human agency" ("Personality" 98). However, he also implies that this mode of artistic "possession" is not limited to "the diabolic." D. H. Lawrence, for example,

> with his acute sensibility, violent prejudices and passions, and lack of intellectual and social training, is admirably fitted to be an instrument for forces of good or forces of evil; or as we might expect, partly for one and partly for the other. (100–01)

17. For instance, see Eliot's remarks in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" regarding the artist as a "medium" (*SE* 20) and his claim that Kipling possessed the gift "of transmitting messages from elsewhere" (Introduction, *Choice* 22). In another essay he has "no good word to say for the cultivation of automatic writing as the model of literary composition" (*SE* 405).

18. Eliot had first encountered Davidson as early as 1917, when he included his name among Dowden, Johnson, and other "nineties" poets in the syllabus for the second year of his tutorial course at Southall, Middlesex (Schuchard 43). In a review written in the same year for the *Egoist,* he applauds Davidson for attaining "an occasional flash of exact vision" ("Reflections" 134).

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Reviews

Hegel Without Reserve

Traumatic Encounters:
Holocaust Representation and the Hegelian Subject
by Paul Eisenstein
Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003. 236 pages

Karyn Ball

The post-Hegelian turn in critical philosophy "after Auschwitz" left residues in contemporary cultural criticism that have also influenced the development of Holocaust and trauma studies in recent years. In *Traumatic Encounters: Holocaust Representation and the Hegelian Subject,* Paul Eisenstein explores how the Hegelian subject might be redeemed for Holocaust and trauma studies from a milieu that has sometimes led to its preemptive burial. The ultimate aim of this redemption is to make a case for recovering the dialectic between the Particular and the Universal in Hegel's conceptualization of the subject of history for the project of bearing witness to the traumatic past. Eisenstein's vehicles for this agenda include Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List,* D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel,* Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus,* and David Grossman's *See Under: Love.* His analyses of these works deliver insight after insight, all of which challenge prevailing assumptions about the limits of witnessing when all perspectives are partial yet nevertheless should—or indeed must—retain universal implications.

Eisenstein remarks the myriad reasons for a political if not fundamentally anti-intellectual suspicion of Hegel in "Holocaust Memory and Hegel," the first chapter of *Traumatic Encounters.* In his discussion of Hegel and his critics, Eisenstein rightly observes that Hegel's dialectic and Absolute Spirit have come to be associated with the aggrandizing and difference-obliterating tendencies of National Socialism. This association follows from reductive interpretations of Theodor W. Adorno's excoriating evaluation of the fate of metaphysics and lyric poetry after Auschwitz and Jacques Derrida's subsequent deconstruction of the ontotheological ideals of unified consciousness and immediate presence in the phenomenological and structuralist traditions. Reductive readings of Adorno and Derrida have, in their turn, sometimes spurred cultural and literary critics to make recourse to anti-identitarian mantras as a justification for a politically activist dismissal of Hegel as a quintessential representative of the Eurocentric and patriarchal Continental tradition. I share Eisenstein's sense that part of the reluctance to read Hegel rests as much on his notorious difficulty as it does on a failure to accept the formalized critical ambivalence of the logic that culminates in the *Aufhebung.* In the *Aufhebung,* the alternating moments of negation and certainty, sensuous consciousness and its knowledge, posit, negate, invert, reverse, and supersede the opposition between putatively independent essences and dependent appearances. To recognize the ineluctable mediation and interdependency of these moments is to move beyond false binaries in order to comprehend and sustain their alterity. The *Aufhebung* thus reflects a formal, dynamic, and ongoing articulation of each moment relative to one another over time and space rather than a homogenizing unification that neutralizes their differences without remainder.

Of course, from a reductive point of view, one of Hegel's most despicable crimes is his authorship of the concept of Absolute Spirit in the *Phenomenology of Spirit.* In the poststructuralist and multiculturalist heydays of the 1980s and 90s, the ideology associated with this concept made him the icon of a totalizing logic of identity that needed to be repudiated in the name of an antifascist politics. Yet as Eisenstein establishes, Absolute Knowing, or Spirit, in Hegel entails a simultaneous recognition of the freedom that abides in historical contingency (and to which Notions themselves are subject) on the one hand and a philosophically comprehensive Science of Knowing on the other. It cannot be separated from the negativity of a "withdrawn *I,*" which Hegel paradoxically identifies as the "substance of Self" externalized over time. This predication of substance as a self-mediated and self-mediating negativity in the last chapter of the *Phenomenology* is the articulation of foregoing intermediations between moments of certainty and negation, and between the positing of essences and appearances that culminates in the simultaneity of the "in itself," the "for itself," and the "for others." These intermediations do not add up to a definition of self-consciousness as mastery. The differences between the subjective and objective aspects of these standpoints can never be resolved; instead, they are brought together in self-consciousness, which is itself given to the same subjectifying and objectifying dynamics. Hence the progress toward a higher level of self-consciousness that begins with perception and ends with Absolute Spirit is presented as a movement of historically mediated becoming rather than the synthesis of a homogenous all-knowing presence.

The failure to grant Hegel's logic its dynamism and formal ambivalence short-circuits the debt that influential thinkers in and outside the Marxist tradition owe to his work as an object of critique and as a departure point for their own contributions to theory. As early as 1941, Marcuse criticized the reductive association between Hegel's logic and totalitarianism in *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory.* In "The Ends of Man" (1968), Derrida remarked the symptomatic significance of the confusion (in the wake of Kojéve's influence on the French reading of Hegel) that amalgamated Hegel with Husserl and Heidegger. Of course, Derrida has also been very critical of Hegel's teleological tendencies. In *Glas,* he exposes the latent eschatology in Hegel's tripartite logic, which mirrors his chauvinistic reflections on the Christian Trinity as an overcoming that inverts and abolishes Judaic law.

Since the publication of *Glas* in 1974, Slavoj Zizek, Stuart Barnett, Susan Buck-Morss, Jochen Schulte-Sasse, and Tilottama Rajan, among others, have called for a revaluation of Hegel that has helped to revive his study among literary and cultural critics. While ignoring Hegel's religious chauvinism, Eisenstein contributes to this contemporary revival by reviewing the intricacies of the dialectic that reveal its potential for rethinking the opposition between universality and particularity in order to redeem it for Holocaust studies. To this end, he highlights Hegel's attention to the experiential and contingent dimension of every universal along with the objective form and condition of every particular. Against uncritical poststructuralist dismissals of Hegel's logic, Eisenstein reminds us that the chapter entitled "Sense-Certainty: Or the 'This' and 'Meaning' [*Meinen*]" acknowledges flux and its mediation through deictic markers (*this, that, here, there, now, then*). The empty universality of these markers implicates the *I* as such in the process of marking time as a measure of the effect of shifting contents at particular moments upon perception, knowing, and self. This chapter in the *Phenomenology* thereby anticipates one of the fulcrum claims of poststructuralist critics who heed Derrida's emphasis via de Saussure on the spatiotemporal flexibility of signs whose value is provisionally determined by changing contexts of reference. In foregrounding the role of language in Hegel's *Phenomenology,* Eisenstein indirectly illuminates its pivotal significance for Derrida's theorization of *différance.* It becomes clear that any absolute opposition between the Hegelian dialectic and deconstruction is itself a mediation that forgets the ways in which identity and difference, determinacy and indeterminacy in Hegel are interdependent insofar as they rely, at the very least, on the notion of their opposites for definition.

His reading of the interface between Hegel's dialectic and the poststructuralist perspective allows Eisenstein to locate an ethical potential in the Hegelian subject for bearing witness to the past:

> if our memorial efforts are informed by the fundamental poststructuralist insight regarding the inability to know or master history objectively, then we become *responsible* for the very substance of history in a radically new way, since history is constantly being fashioned and refashioned, made and remade. (4)

By reclaiming an ethical value for Hegel's delineation of the "substance of history," Eisenstein is making a potentially controversial move within a poststructuralist milieu in which the metaphysics of substance has been repudiated. It is therefore in his redefinition of historical responsibility that Eisenstein's return to Hegel most clearly reflects the contingencies of his own position in the field of Holocaust and trauma studies.

During the period when Eisenstein's project came to fruition, trauma studies were being shaped by Dominick LaCapra, Cathy Caruth, and, indirectly, by Slavoj Zizek. While LaCapra has played a pivotal role in articulating the critical and moral concerns at stake in representing the Holocaust in theory, history, and culture, Caruth has modeled an approach that conjoins a psychoanalytic view of trauma and memory with a deconstructive vigilance about the rhetorical and epistemological indeterminacies that affect representation. In keeping with Caruth's framework, theory itself might be read as a symptomatic refraction of historical trauma while a belated epistemological anxiety is seen to spur the struggle to understand unanticipated events.

LaCapra's critical analyses of debates about the representation of the Final Solution move him to call for a recognition of the specificity of historical traumas over and against the "structural" or "ontological" understandings of neurosis and the aphanisis of identity that generalize trauma in Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis respectively. In this vein, LaCapra targets what he sees as Caruth's conflation of trauma and history. He is also opposed to any move to transcendentalize trauma (as Zizek does under the rubric of the Real), thereby neutralizing the moral differences between victims and perpetrators (since everyone is always already traumatized).

Eisenstein foregrounds the importance of LaCapra's insight into the ways in which the subject positions of historians, filmmakers, and critics mediate their interpretations of the Holocaust. LaCapra enjoins a self-reflexive vigilance on the part of those who represent recent traumatic history concerning their transferential or sympathetic identifications with the motivations and fates of historical actors. According to Eisenstein, LaCapra's deployment of the notion of subject positions "works not just to counter the pretensions of a universalizing, essentializing idea of identity but to work against the subject who *goes too far* in the direction of particularity and individualism" (5). From Eisenstein's standpoint, then, LaCapra acknowledges that "the truth of what it means to bear witness resides in the fragmentary nature of our engagement with the Holocaust, in the fact that our memorial efforts are doomed only to produce something incomplete" (7). Ultimately, this characterization of LaCapra's position provides Eisenstein with a ground for connecting him with a Hegelian dialectic that enunciates the inescapable negativity of judgment as the "substance of history." By extension, Eisenstein can read LaCapra's perspective as a confirmation of the "unsymbolizable dimension of history," which is consonant with the concept of the extimate Real in Lacanian terminology.

What is problematic about this connection is that it potentially aligns LaCapra with Zizek's inversion of the "standard formula of the relationship between the Universal and Particular" (12). According to Eisenstein, this inversion "has the advantage of distinguishing the proper ontological domain of trauma, since trauma is not only that which eludes all attempts to symbolize it, but is also that which gives birth to cognition, to freedom, and to symbolic orders of meaning" (13). I suspect that LaCapra would reject such an alignment, since it reverses and elides his emphasis on the responsibility to respect the particularity of historical traumas over and against the universality of structural or ontological trauma. Eisenstein is clearly distancing himself from LaCapra in claiming that ontological trauma should be conceived as the "proper" focus of trauma studies as well as the basis of specific traumas. An ethical responsibility is hereby located in the "encounter" with structural trauma—in bearing witness to the way in which the issues and processes that produce partiality also constitute the universal condition of traumatic history. History will repeat itself, then, unless the negation of the structures that underlie particular events can itself be negated. This negation of the negation is, thus, the *supersession* that renders them at once determinant of and determinate for consciousness.

This seems to be Eisenstein's main objective in "recovering the Universal" from facile repudiations of Hegel's logic. To the extent that a witness's perspective is "negated" in a Hegelian sense by its partiality, it mirrors the universal role of contingency and mediation in all historical experience. For Eisenstein, the unsymbolizable negativity of the Real is the "substance of history," its essential condition and not merely its effect. Reciprocally, to bear witness to the Holocaust entails a metahistorical encounter with "history proper—that is to say, history in its particularity, in its traumatic dimension." This encounter allows us to take self-conscious responsibility for the Real as the substance of history, and to reflect it back upon our own circumstances in anticipation of the moment when they too will become historical. In short, the universality of structural trauma morally implicates us all—innocent and guilty alike—in the particularity of historical trauma, including genocide.

While this argument is compelling on an ethical level as a response to LaCapra, I ultimately do not find it convincing as a genuine departure from his prioritization of self-consciousness in the work of confronting historical trauma. Eisenstein's reliance on the Hegelian model of consciousness assumes that the only prospect of hope lies in our recognition of ontological trauma, its processes and effects, even if we can never transcend the Real. This model remains consonant with LaCapra's definition of working through as a mode of critically integrating the past in light of the blindnesses and investments that shape our subject positions. Yet in both instances, the radicality of the unconscious, the libidinal economy, and the theory of primary masochism as Freud conceptualized them are being adumbrated. An emphasis on self-awareness presumes that unconscious grids can, perhaps, be brought to consciousness and subsequently incorporated into self-consciousness; however, given the economic and functional dimensions of the unconscious system—its role as a repository for what the perceptual-conscious system cannot dispatch—it would be imprecise to suggest that such grids can somehow be erased as gains in self-consciousness are made. Still more problematic is the issue of primal aggression in Freudian psychoanalysis. Indeed, if Freud is right in 1924 to posit primary masochism as the death-driven impetus of depression and aggression, then it is possible that the interrelation between structural and historical trauma may be deadlocked. For to say that the sadomasochistic binding of the death drive is systemic is to assume that the enjoyment of suffering and violence is necessary and that humans will continue to commit atrocities despite self-consciousness.

LaCapra wants to hold historical actors responsible for their unconscious narcissism as an impetus of the kind of xenophobic arrogance that made Hitler's Germans complacent with deportation and mass death in the name of racial superiority. Eisenstein enjoins a self-conscious encounter with the Real while sidestepping its relation to the unconscious. The question nevertheless remains as to how historical actors can be induced to take responsibility for the unconscious dimensions of their egos and the repressions they precipitate. For this reason, if, as Eisenstein claims, ontological trauma is the condition of historical trauma, then he must take on the problem of the unconscious more concertedly rather than simply deferring it to the structural and epistemological struggle to make phenomena meaningful.

Eisenstein's emphasis on epistemology fails to do justice to the lineage of the concept of the unconscious and the treatment of the symptom between Freud, Lacan, and Zizek. This is surprising, since his "Hegelian subject" is actually a Zizekian subject. This is where his return to Hegel becomes less satisfying, for while he briefly acknowledges his debt to Zizek, the strength of this influence is elided by his repeated references to the Hegelian subject. While Eisenstein foregrounds the Hegelian-Lacanian dimension of Zizek's revision of the dialectic between the Universal and Particular, he also brackets out Zizek's explicit commitment to rethinking the intervening legacy of Marxist dialectics and the project of ideology critique. This treatment converts Hegel into a mouthpiece for Zizek's contemporary redefinition of the Lacanian Real as the kernel of traumatic history. The Hegelian subject is hereby compelled to return to bear witness to the Real as the fulcrum of structural trauma (with the Holocaust as one of its symptoms) after the linguistic turn, but as if there had never been a Marx or an Althusser. The historicity of Hegel's and Zizek's respective agendas consequently drops out. In addition, as Zizek demonstrates, there is more than one Real (or real) in Lacan. In this respect, Eisenstein's ethical appropriation of the category of the Real might have been more strategic if he had considered the rigorous attention that Zizek in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* devotes to historicizing Lacan's various formulations of it over time.

This problem comes to the fore in Eisenstein's analysis of Thomas's *The White Hotel,* where he dismisses Freud rather brutally out of hand rather than evaluating his contribution to the psychoanalytic project and to Lacan/Zizek's conceptualization of the Real. In chapter 3, "Hysteria as Deferral: *The White Hotel* and the Idea of Death," Freudian historiography and specifically Freud's treatment of hysterical symptoms are reviled as a "totalizing" effort (98). Eisenstein's sympathy with the point of view of Thomas's novel leads him to go so far as to insinuate that Freud's disciple Jung was right to critique his mentor's rationalist bias, his "'science' of mental life—that is, its phenomenology, its ways of knowing, its feeding of fantasies" (101). Eisenstein's interpretation of *The White Hotel* suggests that this bias prevents Freud from respecting the "nonrational experiences of the human subject" (105), which renders him obliquely complicit with Nazi atrocities (such as the mass murder at Babi Yar). This is to overlook Freud's agenda for the incipient science of psychoanalysis, which involved a painstaking effort to grant a social and material intelligibility to the "irrational" symptoms of his women patients, whose otherwise undiagnosable inflictions would have been dismissed by a patriarchal medical profession. Eisenstein's reading of Thomas also untenably disables an encounter with the traumatic and intellectual significance of Freud's own professional persecution as a Jew who was ultimately forced to flee Austria to avoid the death camps. It is, perhaps, paradoxical that the accusations normally reserved for Hegel have been leveled against the Jewish father of psychoanalysis. The victim has seemingly become the perpetrator.

Despite Eisenstein's tendency to sidestep the importance of Zizek's Marxist commitments, the strength of his position nevertheless lies in his conscientious recognition of the value of Zizek's inversion of the standard opposition between the Particular and the Universal in order to emphasize that fantasy structures reality. The symptomatic exception does not simply expose the ideological fantasy that covers over the reality (for example the oppressive marginalization of minorities in democracies) but rather the very notion of an opposition between the general and its exception is itself a fantasy that must be regarded as a mode of disavowal, which is to say, as a symptom, in its own right. Such a disavowal is ultimately self-serving insofar as it reaffirms the integrity of democratic universals whose only flaw is, presumably, that they are not more universal in practice. The form or logic of this disavowal is thus the content of liberal democratic ideology: liberals know very well that their principles produce and depend on exceptions that controvert them, but affirm the universality of these principles anyway. Indeed, this is one of Eisenstein's key claims because it allows him dialectically to demonstrate a structural logic of traumatic history that disarticulates falsely reductive moral oppositions between democracy and fascism, liberalism and barbarism.

In Eisenstein's second chapter, "Obsession and the Meaning of Jewish Rescue: Oskar Schindler as Spirit," Eisenstein analyzes what he regards as the normative teleology of Spielberg's film as a kind of reductive reading of the evolutionary and synthetic qualities associated with Hegel's concept of Absolute Spirit in the narrative of liberal progress. Eisenstein then takes up Hegel's consideration of action and motivation to read the concept of Absolute Spirit against the grain. This reading inverts the liberalist narrative, which serves to domesticate and aestheticize the traumatic particularity of Schindler's enigmatic desire. Schindler's desire is "congealed into a more universally human framework" that immobilizes an actual encounter with his *jouissance* and promiscuity by rendering them exceptional in relation to his altruism. In this manner, Eisenstein deploys Zizek/Hegel to expose the film's "obsessional economy"—its fixation on the Holocaust, rescue, survival, and virtue at the expense of a confrontation with the Real of liberalism and the visceral anxiety of its subjects before the implacability of mass death.

Eisenstein's Hegelian standpoint assumes a more explicitly poststructuralist slant in chapters 4 and 5, where he turns to Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* and David Grossmann's *See Under: Love.* In these chapters, Eisenstein further demonstrates the relevance of Hegel's thesis that the negativity at the heart of historical consciousness conditions the encounter with a particular trauma. Along with his discussions of *Schindler's List* and *The White Hotel,* these chapters are also valuable as models of theoretically informed literary criticism that rigorously attends to the meaning of form in films and novels.

In "Leverkühn as Witness: The Holocaust in Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus,*" Eisenstein counteracts readings that go too far in the direction of affirming the novel's ironic distance from the Nazi barbarism that they associate with the work and theory of the composer Adrian Leverkühn as mediated by his biographer Zeitblom. Eisenstein chooses instead to locate the novel's ethical credentials as a venue of historical witnessing in "the Leverkühnian form written about in *Doctor Faustus* but ultimately contained by Mann's (ironic) fidelity to novelistic form" (120). Reading Leverkühn's music against its form allows Eisenstein to see it as a "music of witnessing."

The biographer Zeitblom must wrestle with the "damnation" of Leverkühn and other Germans for their complicity in the ideology that led to the exclusion and murder of the Jews. In Eisenstein's view, the remove of Zeitblom's mediation profoundly links the composer's life and work before the genocide to the moment of the biography written after it. It is in this mediation, then, that the composer's work can be seen as expressing a Hegelian willingness "to systematize the equivocal" by enunciating how it is evinced in Leverkühn's present. Rather than figuring the composer as the regime's prototype, such a reconstruction allows his music to "bear witness to that structural trauma for which that regime promised redress" (121). This structural trauma stems from the horror before an "imbecilic order" that underlies the futility of the totalitarian attempt to bind every signifier to its signified and to ensure the organic meaning and unity of the whole. The composer's exaggerated acts of ordering as evinced in his compositions and theories respond to the violences and losses that punctuate his life; at the same time, they ironically attest to the perspectivalism, provisionality, and contingency that fracture experience and its relation to the language and forms that would articulate it. Leverkühn's art, in Eisenstein's words, "points beneath itself to the abyss for which it stands" (130) to a kind of "constitutional impotence" that belies any activity that would present itself as a cure for the fundamental stupidity of any order. Eisenstein can thus represent Leverkühn as exemplifying *"a way of bearing witness to history without recouping something symbolic from such an act"* (132; Eisenstein's italics). In overriding Mann's own professed allegiance to Christianity over nihilism, Eisenstein's reading finesses the Faustian opposition between damnation and grace that structures the novel while respecting Adorno's injunction against an identitarian mode of redemptive logic that reintegrates the perpetrators but reinscribes the silences of their victims.

For Eisenstein, Mann's *Doctor Faustus* eludes a compensatory ethos through its self-conscious attention to the historically refracted contents of Leverkühn's forms. His dialectical attention to the negativity of form as a "container" for historical consciousness reiterates Eisenstein's challenge, which he sustains throughout the book, to a poststructuralist vigilance against the claim of any narrative to "reach a putative universal position of knowledge." Eisenstein sees this vigilance as partaking in the refusal to recognize "an already-universal order of language and consciousness" which not only postpones an encounter with structural trauma but also defers the task of taking up the question of what a universal position would entail. In his chapter "History as/and Paranoia: David Grossman's *See Under: Love,"* Eisenstein provides us with an analysis of how the novel that memorializes the Holocaust responds to this question in confronting the ways in which a traumatic particular transcends history, but not the universality of the deadly repetitions that condition it.

In this reading, Eisenstein gives us another kind of witness in the protagonist Momik, the son of Holocaust survivors who conspicuously purge their speech of the events from "Over There" in the same way that they scour the house when they suspect their son has contracted polio. According to Eisenstein, Momik's challenge is to work through the paranoia that he inherits from his parents and which compels him to seek to overcome what Hegel understands as "the negative in general." In this respect, Momik enacts a paranoid response to a disparity that Hegel locates in consciousness between "the 'I' and the historical substance that is its object" (146). As Eisenstein argues, "this disparity is," for Hegel, "the *soul* of subjectivity and the object world." It is a "defect" that "conditions the emergence of the order of language and consciousness—implying necessarily that neither this order nor the subjects interpellated within it can ever presume supreme autonomy or insight" (146). For Momik, this negativity deprives him of his ability to suture the *I* with its historical substance and thereby regain his autonomy. More importantly, he needs to move beyond his parents' investment in the catastrophe of Nazism as "the secret truth of alterity, which is what they communicate to their son instead of something about the possibility of love" (157).

Eisenstein's magisterial analysis of Grossman's *See Under: Love* reads it as a self-reflexive effort to arrest the paranoid encounters that perpetuate historical violence

> so that the Holocaust does *not* survive in the form of thinking responsible for it in the first place, so that History does *not* become the perpetuation of the fascist fantasy, so that one does *not*

> begin to think and act as if there really were a meaningfully calcified essence to the alterity of the other and of oneself. (158)

The Nazis subscribed to an economy of sacrifice that would consummate an ultimate Object for a symbolic order bereft of it. Eisenstein's interpretation suggests that Grossman's novel renounces this sacrificial economy in embracing the symbolic order's precariousness as "its condition of possibility" (179). His reading thus provides us with a propaedeutic to the memorial potential of art after Auschwitz.

Finally, though I have taken pains to point out the logical hurdles that Eisenstein's argument confronts, I would nevertheless defend *Traumatic Encounters* as a courageous and worthwhile project in light of the honesty, range, and acuity of its observations and concerns. The State University of New York Press is to be commended for continuing to publish books that are intellectually challenging in a market increasingly geared toward reactive criticism that falls prey to the narcissism of small differences in its corrective parceling out of petty flaws. In contrast, Eisenstein's book is not for those seeking an easy read that summarizes other theory and criticism only to initiate the implied reader into an in-club of the know-slightly-betters. I would recommend *Traumatic Encounters* to scholars who are looking for a sophisticated inquiry about the representation of the Holocaust, trauma, and testimony, and more generally to those who respect the difficulty of thinking when the speculative openness of this task is assiduously sustained.

A Conradian Odyssey

Colonial Odysseys: Empire and Epic in the Modernist Novel
by David Adams
Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003. 249 pages

Thomas Henthorne

Despite its title, which promises a study of colonial odysseys in the modernist novel, *Colonial Odysseys* is primarily a book on Joseph Conrad that examines his use of the odyssey motif in the context of modern British literature and culture. Fortunately, it is a very good book on Conrad whatever the title, since in addition to offering fresh readings of a number of Conrad texts, it addresses a key philosophical question that Conrad and others addressed: how to fill (or "reoccupy," to borrow Hans Blumenberg's term) the god-shaped hole in an increasingly secular culture (10). Ultimately, Adams demonstrates that even though Conrad, like others including Evelyn Waugh and E. M. Forster, was "unable to dispense with questions about the totality of the world and history," he was "able to expose the deficiency of available answers" in his colonial odysseys—that is, in stories that relate themselves, often ironically, to Odysseus's epic journey to alien places (6).

In the opening chapter, Adams discusses Hellenism in relation to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literary culture, contrasting popular Victorian adventure stories with what he identifies as modernist colonial odysseys. Whereas the former, according to Adams, "employ the odyssey myth both to escape from problems of modernity and celebrate the empire" (10), the latter use the myth to associate homecoming with "estrangement and death" (30). Although Adams's discussion of adventure stories is problematic since he relies on the Tarzan stories written by an American, Edgar Rice Burroughs, to demonstrate the prevalence of Hellenism in popular British fiction, his discussion of E. M. Forster's gradual rejection of Hellenism is informative, if abbreviated. Using primarily biographical information, Adams shows how Forster moves from seeking "a rapprochement with modernity" in his early works to accepting that such a rapprochement can never occur. The latter, he argues, can be seen most clearly in *A Passage to India,* a modernist colonial odyssey that "exposes the false hope that imperial power can replace divine power" (44). On the whole, Adams's discussion of Forster works well as an introduction to the theme of "reoccupation" that he takes up in much more detail in the chapters that follow. Since he tends to assert rather than demonstrate, however, particularly when addressing Forster's earlier works, the section adds little to existing Forster criticism.

In the second chapter, Adams provides a theoretical foundation for his analysis of modernism, imperialism, and secularization in relation to the modernist novel. Drawing from the work of Edward Said, Fredric Jameson, Georg Lukacs, and especially Hans Blumenberg, Adams argues that modernist colonial odysseys can be understood as efforts to "reoccupy the god-shaped vacuum" that exists in modern secular culture (74). Adams's strength is in his ability to synthesize elements from the work of distinct theorists into a cohesive whole: he shows how the modernist preoccupation with redemption, power, and death can be understood in metaphysical rather than political terms. Unfortunately, he is less convincing when he tries to connect the metaphysics of modernism to the metaphysics of the novel, in part because the only novel he discusses at any length is Joyce's *Ulysses,* and even then he fails to focus on issues of genre. The chapter would have benefited from further literary examples.

Chapter 3, which is divided into three subchapters, each of which could be considered a chapter in itself, focuses on Joseph Conrad's efforts to employ art as a means of "reoccupation." In his analysis of "Karain," one of Conrad's first colonial odysseys, Adams demonstrates how "[n]either Queen, empire, nor fiction has the power to perform the redemptive role once belonging to the Christian God" (117). Although his conclusions rely on the complex interpretation of the gilt coin featured in the story, he is impressive in his use of textual and historical evidence and ultimately convincing in his claim that Conrad recognizes the inadequacies of British imperialist ideology as a means of reoccupation.

In the section on *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim,* Adams focuses more directly on art's redemptive potential or lack thereof. Here Adams's contributions to Conrad scholarship are valuable not only because he approaches Conrad's best-known colonial odysseys from a philosophical perspective but also because he makes a number of insightful local points about everything from Jim's leap from the *Patna* to Marlow's lie to the Intended. Unfortunately, Adams never reconciles Conrad's philosophical attitudes toward art, imperialism, and modernity with his personal ones. The discussion of *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* would have been richer if he had taken into account both Conrad's education as a member of the Polish intelligentsia and his experiences as a colonial subject of the Russian Empire. At the very least there should be some consideration of how Conrad's Eastern European intellectual milieu differed from that of writers such as Waugh, Forster, and Woolf.

Adams's reading of *Nostromo* is much more satisfying, largely because he discusses it in the context of Conrad's politics, particularly as expressed in his political essay "Autocracy and War." Again, Adams addresses "reoccupation," this time focusing on the redemptive potential of government. To Adams, Conrad is skeptical and pessimistic just as he was in his earlier works: rather than represent popular government as an alternative to the lost Christian God, Conrad suggests that such reoccupation may be impossible (171). Adams, of course, is not unique in recognizing a sense of weariness and despair in *Nostromo,* but his explanation for it is, and so is his discussion of Conrad's philosophy in relation to that of Thomas Hobbes, Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin, and even Slavoj Zizek.

In the study's final chapter, Adams turns to Virginia Woolf, analyzing *The Voyage Out* in relation to her later work, including *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse.* Briefly, he argues that after *The Voyage Out,* her first novel and only colonial odyssey, Woolf "dispenses with the need to traverse the empire and history in search of comprehensive knowledge" (11). Although the argument seems rather pat, Adams makes up for it by interweaving biographical evidence with a lively discussion of some of Woolf's novels. He also does an excellent job of relating Woolf's artistic concerns to Conrad's, particularly as they are expressed in the preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (178–79). Although one could argue that the chapter contributes as much to our understanding of Conrad as it does to Woolf, Adams is lucid and convincing, and if nothing else, the chapter is a fine read.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, given its preoccupation with Conrad, *Colonial Odysseys* offers the most to Conradians. Indeed, Adams's contribution here is significant because his philosophical approach is original and he considers Conrad's colonial odysseys in detail. In contrast, his discussions of Forster and Woolf are a bit thin. He explains how some of their works could be understood as attempts at "reoccupation" but never fully demonstrates it. Fleshing out the argument would make *Colonial Odysseys* a much longer book but not necessarily a better one. Changing the book's title so that it acknowledges Conrad as a primary topic would be simpler and more appropriate.

American Poetry and Chinese Art: New Perspectives on a Cross-Cultural Relationship

The Modernist Response to Chinese Art
by Zhaoming Qian
Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003. 274 pages

Feng Lan

It was a common belief among classical Chinese poets that poetry and painting shared the same source of creativity (*shi hua tong yuan*), one that enabled them to transcend the mundane and capture the sudden revelations of visionary moments in a permanent form of beauty. Thus, to paraphrase the Song poet Su Shi's famous observations on the Tang poet Wang Wei, a good poet possesses the capability of making his verse simultaneously display verbal and visual sublimity. Such a conviction, as Zhaoming Qian suggests in his new book, influenced the American poets Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, and Wallace Stevens, not only inspiring their creative practices but also constituting the key to an important aspect of American literary modernism that Qian calls the "modernist response to Chinese art." Qian's book is both impressively erudite and highly readable, sustained by lucid writing, insightful perceptions, and cogent arguments. By exploring a hitherto overlooked subject, his inquiry makes significant contributions to several fields, including modernist poetry, comparative literature, and transnational cultural production. More intriguingly, it also raises issues impelling us to reconceptualize the enterprise of orientalism.

Qian's book is intended to appeal to several types of audience in addition to readers of modern American poetry. This intention is reflected in the thoughtful organization of 14 essays in five parts, a framework that allows him to concentrate on a set of primary issues from coherent perspectives, both critical and chronological, rather than on individual poets. For instance, students of Chinese art and art history would find part 1 particularly informative. In addition to shedding fresh light on the three poets' initial encounter with Chinese art, this part reconstructs the intellectual climate of London and New York in ways that valuably facilitate Qian's insight into the Western engagement with Chinese art in the early decades of the twentieth century. Similarly, those who are interested in the interplay between verbal and visual representations would enjoy reading part 3, wherein Qian's analysis of the poems in light of the artworks from which the poets drew inspirations yields a brilliant rereading of modernist ekphrasis. Such an analysis, moreover, is rendered all the more engaging by the large number of exquisite illustrations of Chinese artworks.

Qian's central argument consists of two major claims. The first is that Chinese visual culture played a more significant role in the formation of American literary modernism than has been recognized. Supported by a wealth of new findings obtained from his meticulously conducted research in museums and archives, Qian demonstrates how intensely the impact of Chinese art permeated the creative life of the three poets. From this perspective Qian sets out to reinterpret some of their best-known poems "against radically different, Eastern paradigms" (xvi), and in doing so he greatly enriches our understanding of these poems. His most original interpretations appear in his examination of Pound's poems. Contrary to prevalent critical opinions, Qian argues that in composing "In a Station of the Metro" Pound owes as much to Chinese landscape paintings as to the Japanese haiku, if not more. Qian has also provided the best clarification so far of the complex relationship of Pound's "Canto 49" with the eight painted scenes in the sourcebook the poet used, thus reaffirming the poem's remarkable achievements as representative of modernist ekphrasis. Qian's visual approach allows him to make discoveries where they are least expected. Expert readers of Pound have generally agreed that his early renderings of classical Chinese poems come closer in spirit to the original than literal translations do. But few have been able to explain convincingly how Pound, ignorant of the Chinese language at the time, could accomplish such intuitively perceptive translations. Qian argues persuasively that Pound was able to capture the sensibility of the original Chinese poems because he had been enlightened by his earlier encounter with Chinese art.

Qian's second major claim is that the visual medium of Chinese art played a powerful role in transmitting the Chinese mode of thought into the Western mind. Construed in this light, Moore's "Nine Nectarines" not only posits her "imitation of Chinese imagination" but actually serves as her strategy to reinstate the principles of Chinese aesthetics (120). The most provocative point Qian makes in this regard concerns Pound's early attraction to Confucian ideas. There has been a great deal of speculation as to when and how Pound began to develop his interest in Confucianism. This is a crucial issue in Pound studies because it is relevant to the evaluation of Pound's ideological position before and during the Second World War, a controversial position that many critics believe resulted from his interest in Confucianism starting from the early 1930s. Qian insists that Pound's interest in Confucianism began as early as his London years from 1909 to 1912, during which he "was initiated into Confucian ideals via the British Museum collection of Chinese paintings" (47). While I find Qian's conclusion open to debate, his argument does force us to rethink Pound's relationship with the Confucian tradition.

Qian has also made an impressive case for Stevens's indebtedness to the art of Zen Buddhism (to which Qian refers as "Chan" for the obvious reason of reasserting its Chinese origin). Stevens's Buddhist mode of "meditative" poetics, to use Williams Bevis's term, has been explored by several previous scholars. None of them, however, has been able to base his exploration on such concrete evidence of Zen influence as Qian has supplied. By identifying the "precise Oriental or Chan elements" in a number of Stevens's well-known poems (87), like "The Snow Man," Qian's elucidation enables us to see the transformative power of Stevens's creative mind as well as better appreciate these poems.

Much of Qian's critical strength derives from his firm grounding in the intellectual traditions of America and China. Besides a profound understanding of modern American poetry, Qian's study evidences a solid grasp of Chinese art history and aesthetic conventions. Among scholars in the study of American poetry who are truly conversant with Chinese culture, Qian is matched only by Wai-lim Yip in his skillful integration of classical Chinese knowledge with Western literary hermeneutics. There is no doubt that *The Modernist Response to Chinese Art* is one of the best comparative literature studies in recent years. Yet this study is distinguished by an additional important feature: unlike some Western cultural comparatists who tend to apply a deconstructionist, thus virtually unsympathetic, approach to Eastern cultures, Qian is determined to present Chinese culture as a rich source of wisdom and inspiration, a tradition that can offer the West a different worldview as well as an alternative mode of spiritual existence, and hence a value system commanding admiration and appreciation.

Such a fundamental agenda as Qian conveys in this book appears consistent with what he promulgated in *Orientalism and Modernism* (1995), his previous study of Pound and Williams. As one of the first from the camp of American-Chinese comparative studies to challenge Edward Said's definition of orientalism, Qian in his earlier book undertook to revaluate American-Chinese cultural relations by establishing an alternative orientalism, a model of literary imitation rather than one of political control and domination. Qian's undertaking was shared by several other critics, notably Cynthia Stamy in her formulation of a "subversive orientalism" based on her study of the Chinese influence on Moore. It is useful, though, to point out that Stamy's work ventured into an important area that Qian's first book had overlooked, namely the ideological drives behind American writers' utilization of Chinese culture. It is an area that again has not received due attention in Qian's new book, which shows as well the same overriding preoccupation with literary or aesthetic issues to the extent of depoliticizing the relationship between Chinese culture and the discursive praxis of the American poets. This neglect is regrettable because American writers' reliance on Chinese culture has been driven by political desires that are often as strong and problematic as what has characterized European orientalists. For instance, Pound's appropriation of Chinese values was partly sustained by his intention to construct a counterdiscourse against what he deemed the "poisonous" influence of Hebew culture on Western civilization. By this I am not suggesting that Qian should turn a literary study into a political investigation. This book, after all, is concerned with the issues of art and poetry. Still, if he gave more attention to the political aspects of Chinese influence on these American poets, Qian would make an even more persuasive case for the kind of alternative orientalism he envisions.

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